AUTUMN 1932

# CINEMA QUARTERLY

IN THIS NUMBER

HERBERT READ

JOHN GRIERSON

PAUL ROTHA

IVOR MONTAGU

ERIK CHISHOLM

BASIL WRIGHT

FORSYTH HARDY

NORMAN WILSON

etc. etc.

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# CINEMA QUARTERLY

Edited by NORMAN WILSON Review Editor: FORSYTH HARDY
London Correspondent: BASIL WRIGHT

Volume 1 Number 1 Autumn 1932

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# CINEMA QUARTERLY

## AUTUMN 1932

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## THE SPECTATOR

THE public gets what it wants. That phrase has been repeated by film producers so often that they have almost deluded themselves into believing it to be true. On the contrary, it is utterly false. The public takes what it gets, pays for it, and goes away unsatisfied. The fact that it comes back again for more proves nothing beyond the fact that the film industry employs the most efficient and persuasive publicity system in existence. The showman beats his drum and the people queue up for the spectacle: Tarzan, the Ape-man; Frankenstein, the Human Monster.

But we need not be too hard on the trade. There will always be a public for sensationalism, and from their own point of view, and in accordance with their commercial ethics, which are no concern of ours, they would be foolish not to cater for it. The mistake they make, however, is in imagining that this is the only public. There is another, undefined and inarticulate, yet capable of becoming for the producers a large additional source of income, if cultivated with intelligence and forethought. The comparative success of such films as *Le Million*, *Mädchen in Uniform*, and *Kameradschaft*, despite their foreign dialogue and lack of organized publicity, has proved beyond doubt that there is an intelligent cinema audience sufficiently large to support films of the highest artistic standard if they are given the benefit of the commercial resources that are placed behind any other type of picture. Only when it is recognised that this audience is no small body of intellectuals but a large and steadily growing section of the general public, will the standards of the cinema rise to the level of those films which, with befitting irony, have come to be known as "unusual."

Of what type of person, then, does this new public consist? From a careful study of audiences in different parts of the country we would say that by far the larger proportion is made up of average, intelligent people who, by regular cinema-going, have come to realise the potentialities of the cinema as a medium of expression with greater range and depth than any of the older arts. The remainder includes open-minded persons of the type who are always willing to see any work of art which they are led to believe is of real worth, and a negligible band of dilettante poseurs who have fastened on the cinema as a new outlet for their preciosity.

All over the country these people are forming societies for the study and advancement of the art in which they have come to believe with an enthusiasm that is rapidly making converts of those who, not without some justification, used to believe that cinema was merely the vulgar entertainment of the ignorant. Every new film of artistic achievement or fine intention, every *Tabu*, every *Kameradschaft*, fires some member of its audience with a sudden conviction of the possibilities of the medium, and sets him off crusading.

But film societies, numerous though they are becoming, touch only the fringe of this vast new movement towards something better in cinema, which, so far, lacks both guidance and a voice with which to articulate its desires. CINEMA QUARTERLY, it is hoped will in some measure supply both these necessities, and, perhaps for the first time in cinema journalism, present in an adequate manner the spectator's point of view. The completest detachment possible is necessary for the evaluation of any work of art, and the opinion of the disinterested spectator, remote and unprejudiced, is therefore of no little importance. The fact that publication of the *Quarterly* is removed from the intimacies of Wardour Street and the studios is also not without significance.

While a knowledge of the technical processes and the organization of material involved in production is necessary for a proper understanding and appreciation of the film, familiarity with the accidents and incidents which attend the progress from scenario to projector of any particular film should have no influence on a judgment of its eventual appearance on the screen. In the final estimate, what matters only is the visual image, and, nowadays, its aural accompani-

ment, viewed and heard in the auditorium of the cinema. On that finality, directors, producers—the entire fabric of cinema—stand or fall. While we shall keep contact in essentials with studios and trade, the screen and its images shall be our first consideration. Our rôle, as far as possible, will be that of the detached spectator.

It would be easy to give prominence in these pages to editorial ideas and predilections, but whatever their value might be, they are of secondary importance to the task which lies before us. CINEMA QUARTERLY has been founded as a forum for the expression of all shades of opinion, and we must of necessity preserve a completely open mind. For our guidance we depend on a deep-rooted faith in the ultimate value of the film, not as an art form with an end in itself, but as a medium for the communication of ideas and the exposition of ideals.

Plato judged literature by the extent to which it conveyed truthful information on the facts of life. Both literature and the film is capable of much more than this primary function, but film-makers at least would be none the worse of a short course in Platonic philosophy. Hollywood in particular has developed a habit of distorting and falsifying the facts of life to create a world of its own which is so far removed from reality that anything its films attempt to say is utterly worthless. In the fullness of life there is abundance of material for the director to dramatise; only poverty of intellect or an inherent dread of facing the tough facts of existence can be responsible for the creation of an artificial world where everything is possible and nothing is of consequence. Russian films are studied for their technique, which is certainly not their least gift to the world, but it is worth remembering that their strength, apart from technical accomplishment, lies in the fact that they deal directly with the essentials and realities of life; the Russian director does not need to manufacture unlikely situations and create synthetic characters to fulfil purposeless rôles. But outside the Soviets only Flaherty and Pabst get anywhere near the real heart of mankind.

Whatever else CINEMA QUARTERLY stands for, it stands for sincerity. With all the vigour it can muster it will attack the empty masquerade of sham sentiments and false emotions that is the stock-in-trade of most commercial

movie. Technical swagger too often misleads both the critics and the public into accepting as works of first-rate importance films entirely devoid of purpose or any idea of value. With a few notable exceptions—which must include C. A. Lejeune and G. A. Atkinson—it is only rarely that a critic concerns himself with the content of the film. Treatment, technique, and the niceties of acting are written about at length, but theme and plot, it seems, have come to be regarded as matters about which the less said the better, and it is now almost a convention to ignore the contents and judge only the technical embellishments. Virtuosity, however, has little value in itself, and unless the technician has something to express, and unless that something has the ring of truth, his talents are prostituted. Sincerity of purpose is the touchstone of a film's worth.

But worthy films do not come out of the void, and we are not forgetful that the trade has given us all the good pictures that have ever been. Even Hollywood, in spite of itself, occasionally produces a film of downright sincerity that confounds its critics. Our main purpose shall be to recognise such films and to lead others to an appreciation of their finer qualities. With Clive Bell, we believe that the primary function of the critic is to guide—to put the public in the way of aesthetic comprehension, not by imparting the opinions of the critic, but by stimulating an appreciative state of mind.

The hurried conditions under which most newspaper criticism is composed is fair neither to the critics nor the cinema. A casual view of the average film is no doubt sufficient, but a picture which calls for the highest standards of appraisement must be seen several times before it can be judged with fairness. It must be related not only to what has gone before, but to contemporary achievement; in other words, it must fall into its proper perspective. This we feel is more possible in a quarterly publication than in a weekly or even a monthly periodical. In our review pages this or that much-talked-of film may be found missing—simply because in a leisurely comparison of values it has been found to fall short of the higher standard of the quarter's record.

NORMAN WILSON.

# TOWARDS A FILM AESTHETIC

●

## HERBERT READ

THE aesthetic of an art is always resented by the practitioner, and perhaps there is a particular reason why theory should not obtrude itself on the art of the film. That art is not yet formed, and to theorise about something which is not yet fully in being may seem the height of pedantic indiscretion. But one kind of aesthetics is essentially *a priori*: it is the discovery of universal laws of art, and if the film is to be an art, then these theoretical considerations are as relevant to it as to any other art, and can guide its line of development.

*If the film is an art*—but what else can it be? A technical process? But so is etching, for example; so is every art that uses a tool. To determine whether a given process is an art or not, we need only ask one question—does it involve *selection*? For selection implies (a) a standard for which selection is made; (b) sensibility to distinguish according to this standard. The exercise of sensibility in the interests of a standard is an elementary definition of art. Selection, I think it can be shown, is the very first principle of the film; the film is therefore essentially an art.

The film is visual. That fact immediately links it—from the point of view of aesthetics—with the visual or, as they are more commonly but less accurately called, the plastic arts. "Moving pictures"—the Movies—that is the most descriptive title which has ever been given to the Film. Picture and Movement: that is the definition of a film, and if we can introduce into the aesthetics of pictorial art the modifications required by this new factor, then we shall have an aesthetic of the Film.

But it is not so simple as it sounds. To introduce this new factor into the picture involves conditions which almost entirely separate pictorial art (let us say painting) from the

film. This is the essential distinction—even opposition—between the painting and the film: the painting is composed subjectively, the film objectively. However highly we rate the function of the scenario writer—in actual practice it is rated very low—we must recognise that the film is not composed directly and freely from the mind by means of a docile medium like paint, but must be composed directly out of the lumbering material of the actual visible world.

Painting is a synthesis (I ignore the crude notion that it is imitation); the film is essentially analysis. The painter composes within his mind (that is to say, makes a synthesis of) selected elements of his visual experience. (In the actual process of composition he goes beyond his experience, guided by imagination and sensibility.) The director of a film begins with the same visual experience, but he is anchored to his material. To make his material significant—significant of more than its actuality, its news value—he must break the continuity of his vision—jump from one stepping-stone of significance to another. He must analyse the scene for its significant aspects. (For example, in films like *Rain* or *Pierement* the camera's motto is "Say when." The producer goes about like a ferret for significance, crying "Now!"

The film purists insist on the mechanical nature of the process (as though a paintbrush, an engraving-tool, a piano, were not also pieces of mechanism). The true inspiration for the film, they say, is to be found in its technical possibilities. "Der Apparat ist die Muse" (Béla Balázs). But it is necessary to distinguish between the tool and the material (the medium), between the "Apparat" and that which is operated upon. The sculptor's muse is not his chisel, but the marble; perhaps more accurately it is the impact of these two factors, creative inspiration depending on a sensuous reaction to the feel of the chisel against the marble. There is the same sensuous factor in the application of a charged brush to canvas; and the same factor is obvious in music. The camera is the film-director's tool, his medium is light, or rather the impact of light on solid objects. It might be better still to regard the camera as a chisel of light, cutting into the reality of objects. In any case, light is the muse.

We might abandon the word selection, because it is too static in its implications. We need to emphasise the

mobility, the plasticity of the film. For this is the quality by virtue of which the film becomes an art. I have used these two words, mobility and plasticity, as interchangeable. But note that in sculpture, for example, an object is moulded, made plastic, to arrive at an immobile, absolute, eternal object; in the film the immobility (even when moving!) of objects is, as it were, unmoulded, made plastic, to arrive at a mobile, relative, and transitory object. Sculpture is the art of space, as music is of time. The film is the art of space-time: it is a space-time continuum.

There are at least three directions (or dimensions) in which movement may take place: (1) movement of the camera, (2) movement of light, (3) movement of the object photographed. Combinations of such movements produce almost endless possibilities of plastic form.

The true plasticity of the film, the plasticity which gives the film its uniqueness, is a plasticity of light. An essential film would be an abstract film, a "pure" creation of light and darkness, just as an essential painting is an abstract painting. But such films are only for the purists.

The question of form is difficult. Even in painting we must distinguish between closed form (form determined by the frame and plane of the painted surface) and open form (form which ignores these limits and prolongs itself into the space about the painting, typified in Baroque form). We may select "stills" for their closed form—for their pictorial composition—but the film itself is essentially open form. It continually implies the space around the objects represented and beyond the limits of the screen; it endeavours to make the part represent the whole. It is an art of "cuts"—economy cuts.

Its freedom threatens the film; it is a runaway. The problem of the film as an art-form may be reduced to the invention of proper conventions. It must reject the unities proper to the drama (nothing is so feeble as the filmed play), but it must discover the unities proper to a space-time "continuum." Perhaps its only possible unity is the absence of any unity; the film is essentially alogical. In the film events can occur simultaneously; they can be represented in more than one unit of dimension; time itself can be controlled. Its only unity is continuity.

How easily this continuity may be destroyed is seen in the average talkie. The talk interrupts the continuity of the movement, or at least delays it. We begin to listen, instead of looking. But once we consciously listen in the cinema, we might as well be in the theatre.

It is difficult to see any art-form evolving out of the talkie. But we must distinguish between the talkie pure and simple, and the film with "effects." Even speech may be an effect, as we see most clearly in René Clair's films, where speech is used sparingly, and never interrupts the continuity of the film. Speech must keep time with the film, but the normal film annihilates time. Therefore it must annihilate speech.

The same observations may be made of musical accompaniment. It must keep time with the film. Therefore the film must either be a direct transcript of the music (as a film of a dancer dancing to music might be), or the music must be composed for the film (as Edmund Meisel's music for "Potemkin").

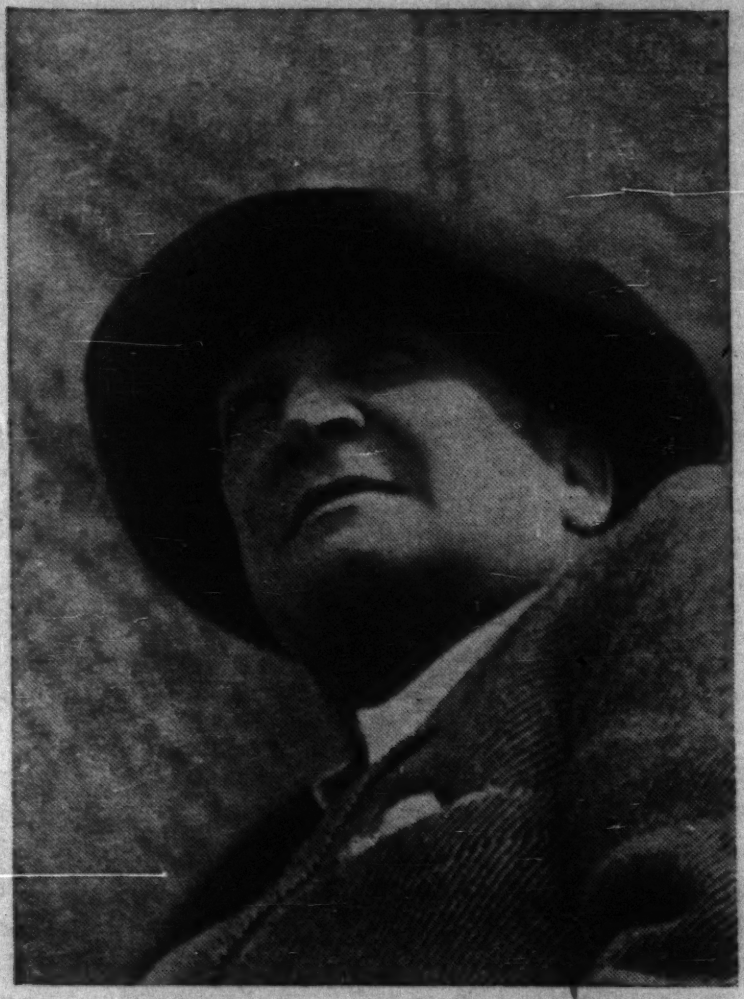
This does not imply that the talkie has no future. But its laws will not be the laws of the pure film, and the sooner it works out its own salvation the better. Rudolf Arnheim ("Film als Kunst"*) uses the following analogy. A piece of music may be composed as a solo for the piano. It may afterwards be transposed as a duet for piano and violin. It will remain essentially the same piece of music, but both the piano part and the violin part taken separately will not represent the original music; each has been modified to make a unity when played together. So both speech and film must be modified to make a perfect talkie.

Ignoring the plasticity of the filming process itself, we may still find a justification of the film as an art-form in the process of montage. Montage is mechanised imagination. The producer deliberately interferes with the anonymity, the impersonality of the camera. He takes its mechanical products (how little mechanical they need be we have already seen) and arranges them as freely as the painter arranges his forms and colours. It is the most important stage in the whole process of film-production, aesthetically considered. This has been realised by film specialists like Pudowkin and

*Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, Berlin.

Timoschenko. Arnheim, in the book already cited, examines their principles and reduces them (or rather extends them —they occupy four pages!) into a logical order. There are four main principles: (1) the principle of cutting itself, (2) time conditions, (3) space conditions, and (4) relations of content. The first principle is concerned with questions of rhythm (a series of relatively long and equal scenes securing a peaceful rhythm, a series or alternate long and short scenes securing a quicker rhythm, and so on), with questions of scenes within scenes, scenes running concurrently, and with all ways of combining the part and the whole, close-ups and concentration, etc. The second principle is concerned with securing effects of contemporaneity, effects of memory and foresight, causal effects, annihilation of time effects, etc. The third principle secures the same kind of effects by showing different events in the same setting, or by jumping from one space conception of a scene to another space conception of the same scene. The fourth principle secures parallelism or contrast of effects, or both together (e.g., Timoschenko: the shackeled feet of a prisoner in his cell, followed by the legs of a ballet dancer at the theatre).

The more we insist on the plasticity of the film (that is to say, on its artistic possibilities) the more we require the imaginative artist in the process of production. This is quite against the present trend, which is to reduce the rôle of the scenario-writer to insignificance. But when the film has exhausted its technical élan, then it must inevitably return to the poets. For the quality of an art always depends finally on the quality of the mind directing it or producing it, and no art can survive on a purely mechanical inspiration. There will always be a place for the recording film, for the scientific film, the news film; but finally the public will demand the film of imagination, of vision. And then will come the day of the poet, the scenario-writer, or whatever we are to call him. For actually this artist will be a new type of artist—an artist with the visual sensibility of the painter, the vision of the poet, and the time-sense of the musician. Instead of doubting the artistic possibilities of the film as a medium, we should rather doubt the artistic capability of man to rise to the high opportunities of this new medium. It is a new Pandora's box that the movie-man carries about, from which he has already released all kinds of evils, but at the bottom of which hope still remains.



# ROBERT J. FLAHERTY

Flaherty's career in cinema dates from 1921. At that he had been for some years an explorer for mineral deposits, had never been inside a film studio and knew nothing of cinematography. When he embarked on an exploring expedition in the Hudson Bay on behalf of Revillon Frères, the Paris furriers, he took with him a movie camera and familiarised himself with its use within a few weeks. After living in the Eskimo country for several months, he began to make a film of native life, later to become famous as *Nanook of the North*. This film took Flaherty to Hollywood.

While under contract to Paramount, he went to Samoa and there made *Moana*. The next film with which he was associated was *White Shadows of the South Seas*, for M. G. M., but as a result of studio intervention, he gave up the contract, For a similar reason, he gave up work on a film of life among the Indians of New Mexico for Fox when it was half completed.

His last film *Tabu*, also a study of life in the South Seas, was made independently in co-operation with the late F. W. Murnau.

# FLAHERTY

●

## JOHN GRIERSON

I FOUND the director of *Nanook* and *Moana* on the westernmost end of the Aran Islands. The pre-Christian fort of Dun-Aengus hung above his cottage, opening its great concentric half-circles over a high cliff to the Atlantic. The rock flats about him, the fields built over the rock with patient hand-gatherings of soil, the white smoke clouds from the iodine fires, the natives in home-spun, tam o' shanters and oxhide pampooties, and the curraghs upturned on the shore, indicated for any one who knew Flaherty's work the essentials of his latest scenario. He introduced me to his boatman, who was also his hero, and to his kitchen-maid, who was also his heroine. Briege, the fine, dark-eyed old lady, who whirled the large Irish spinning wheel by his door, suggested a curse in the last reel but one—the curse implied in everything Flaherty makes—on things new-fangled and unnecessary, on everything destructive of the ancient dignities she represented. The overhanging fort of Dun-Aengus, with its twenty centuries or so of primitive power, was clearly a chosen presence: integral to the set.

I have met some of the great men of cinema, but can think of none more impressive in his mind and presence than this American-born, Canadian-trained explorer. For the ten or twelve years since he brought *Nanook* out of the Arctic and abandoned his discovering of Belcher Islands and mapping of Northern Labrador for cinema, he has stood uncompromisingly for everything that is fine in film. The story of his long fight with Hollywood is perhaps the best of all Hollywood stories, because it is the single one in which personal advantage has been sacrificed at every turn for a decent result.

*Nanook* was the simple story of an Eskimo family and its fight for food, but in its approach to the whole question of film making was something entirely novel at the time it

was made. It was a record of everyday life so selective in its detail and sequence, so intimate in its 'shots,' and so appreciative of the nuances of common feeling, that it was a drama in many ways more telling than anything that had come out of the manufactured sets of Hollywood. In *Moana* Flaherty adopted the same method with the Samoans. Without actors, almost without acting, he built up in his camera what he considered the essential story of their lives. This second film stated the difference of his approach even better than *Nanook*. Because of the great financial success of the first film Flaherty found himself commissioned by the film people to "make another *Nanook*." It is their way to repeat themselves. Hollywood could only think of other food agonies, the different climate and circumstance of Samoa notwithstanding. In the issue it was disappointed, as it was bound to be. Flaherty's film was the story of how the Samoans, blessedly freed from the more primitive pains of life, had still to invent pain to demonstrate their manhood. He made the story of the Tattoo. Hollywood, asking for battles with sharks, got the loveliness of a ceremonial prayer to the gods. And asking for dark-skinned bathing belles, got a quiet dignified young heroine with a flower in her ear, who danced superbly but could not possibly be confused with whoopee. In desperation they issued the film as "the love life of a South Sea Siren," and gave it a prologue of jangling guitars and shimmying chorus girls.

Now, after even more desperate battles in the making and abandoning of *White Shadows of the South Seas* (the bathing belles this time included), and a film on the Red Indian rain dance, which crashed because of a Hollywood insistence on love story, Flaherty has at last been given a decent independence. For this the producer Balcon is responsible. In some opinions, it is the most promising act of production policy we have yet had from English cinema, for, whatever the picture's box office result, it must inevitably add to our cinema a new standard of intention and craftsmanship. Here, on the Aran Islands, Flaherty is free to make as he wishes, and with such time as he requires: without hindrance of schedule pundits and scenario pundits, and without the constant threat of those "Men from Wigan" who, according to the more ordinary spirits of Wardour Street, must ever dictate our quality.

Flaherty was so appreciative of the fact that he was full

of the possibilities of our English cinema, and particularly of our English documentary cinema. If here on the Arans —only so many hours from London—there was this story of romantic life ready to the camera, how many more must there be! He mentioned the Hebrides and the Highlands, and sketched out a film of Indian village life. He spoke of the tales of fine craftsmanship which must be tucked away in our Black Country. But first, he emphasised, there must be the process of discovery and freedom in discovery: to live with the people long enough to know them. He talked with a certain rising fury of the mental attitude of the studio-bred producer who hangs a slicked-out story of triangles against a background of countryside or industry. Rather must the approach be, to take the story from out the location, finding it essentially there: with patience and intimacy of knowledge as the first virtues always in a director. He referred to a quotation I once wrote for him in New York, when his seemingly tardy method of production was first an issue in the studios. It was Plato's description of his metaphysic where he says that no fire can leap up or light kindle till there is "long intercourse with the thing itself, and it has been lived with." No doubt the studios, with their slick ten or fifteen-day productions of nothing-in-particular, still disagree with Flaherty and Plato profoundly. His idea of production is to reconnoitre for months without turning a foot, and then, in months more perhaps, slowly to shape the film on the screen: using his camera first to sketch his material and find his people, then using his screen, as Chaplin uses it, to tell him at every turn

No director has the same respect as Flaherty for the camera; indeed very few of them even trouble to look through the camera while it is shooting their scenes. Flaherty, in contrast, is always his own 'first cameraman.' He spoke almost mystically of the camera's capacity for seeing beyond mortal eye to the inner qualities of things. With Fairbanks he agrees that children and animals are the finest of all movie actors, because they are spontaneous, but talks also of the movements in peasants and craftsmen and hunters and priests as having a special magic on the screen because time or tradition has worn them smooth. He might also add —though he would not—that his own capacity for moving the camera in appreciation of these movements is an essential part of the magic. No man of cameras, to my knowledge,

can pan so curiously, or so bewilderingly anticipate a fine gesture or expression.

The present application of these views was plain to see. He explained that he had first dug himself in, freeing himself from the rigmarole of studios by the simple expedient of building everything he needed on the spot: his laboratory for developing and printing, his cottage (with a section of glass in the roof) for interiors, his power unit for lighting effects. His technical staff was one youthful assistant, acting as lab.-boy, camera hand and production manager. The rest of the story was one small camera moving quietly, almost casually, from scene to scene, building up, detail by detail, his island family's struggle for a livelihood: making dramatic events of their little harvests on land and sea by the simple revelation of how much each harvest meant to them. The revelation of feelings, as I gathered it, was seldom, if ever, achieved by the staging of expressions. The camera was used much more intimately than usual, in the sense that it attended on action rather than had action presented to it; and this contributed partly to the result. The sequence of events showed a careful use of suspense, in the sense that nothing was revealed until it had first been obscured; and this also contributed. But the key to Flaherty's method was undoubtedly in his power to "motivate" the reactions of his people. He provided them with the real situations which engaged their affections.

Flaherty's conversation, and the medley of books about him, were evidence of how deeply he had gone into the life of his Aran Islanders. Their history, their art, their tales of yesterday and to-day, their village gossip, their little adventures: he was more full of detailed anecdote than of the theory of cinema. His answer to a question submitted on sound and silence was more likely to be a tale of pocheen on the Thursday before, a breaking of ribs, and a crazy islander strutting and stamping against the horizon in the twilight; or of another, more definitely mad, galloping for three days and nights across the island, with the police furiously accompanying till he had committed an offence. As is proper in a director on location, Flaherty tended to particularise.

He was, however, very concerned with the question of special audiences. In the present policy of a maximum hear-

• From Robert J. Flaherty's documentary film of Life in the Aran Islands, off the West Coast of Ireland. Provisionally entitled "Man of Aran." It is being financed by Gaumont-British.

• Types from Flaherty's film of the Aran Islands—" in homespun, tam o' shanters and oxhide pampooties "—

ing for every film, he sees the very greatest menace to film qualities. He considers that the cinema publics should be distinguished according to their tastes, just as the reading publics are, and rages over the dreadful sales organisations of the film world which are keyed only to one type of product. His complaint about *Moana* was that the salesmen who went out with it did not know how to sell it *except* as "the love life of a South Sea siren." He told me how in desperation he went to the company handling it and suggested a method by which the film might be put over in the toughest towns they cared to select. They suggested six, and Flaherty, by canvassing the educational, lecture, and other more deeply-minded organisations, made a roaring success of the experiment. He is now anxious to bring home to producers the greater international circulation to be got for films which have a minimum of dialogue. He recalled the distribution figures for Chaplin's last film and for *Tabu*, neither of which had an English vernacular to disturb foreign audiences. His point is that by "using sound internationally" a film may very well make up in wider circulation for its specialised appeal in any single market.

He would not, however, make this commercial argument so strongly if he did not believe also that the better result is to be got by avoiding dialogue. In so far as it is staged, he very naturally discards dialogue, just as he discards the other elements of studio or theatrical production. His ideal in the new medium is a selective documentation of sound similar at all points to his selective documentation of movement and expression in the silent film. He would use the microphone, like the camera, as an intimate attendant on the action: recording the accompanying sounds and whispers and cries most expressive of it. He says the language doesn't matter at all, not even the words, if the spirit of the thing is plain. In this point as in others, Flaherty's cinema is as far removed from the theatrical tradition as it can possibly be. His screen is not a stage to which the action of a story is brought, but rather a magical opening in the theatre wall, through which one may look out to the wide world: overseeing and overhearing the intimate things of common life which only the camera and microphone of the film artist can reveal.

# APPROACH TO A NEW CINEMA

## PAUL ROTHA

LINGERING contemplation of beauty, that attribute of the well-fed, has no place in the aesthetic of the cinema. This is an age of sudden emotions and instantaneous reactions. The science of the machine-cinema assails us, demanding the co-operation both conscious and sub-conscious of the audience. Shock values are the materials of dramatic construction. The community excitement of the English football crowd, where every man and woman is passionately susceptible to the drama of the game, is an ideal aim for the film director. He must employ the technique of his craft to play upon the feelings of the community. However we argue or avoid the point, we cannot get away from the fact that there exists a profound inter-relationship between the film director and the public. For its very existence as an industry, the cinema depends entirely upon the people and the final judgment on a great film must always be theirs. Until now, the majority of directors have relied for greatness upon the universal appeal of their story and have not attempted to analyse the community appeal of their particular type of technique. It is true that the theme or story is of primary interest to the public, but at the same time its acceptance or rejection by the public depends very greatly on the technical style favoured by the director. The international attributes of the cinema are often sacrificed in a search for universal story-material. But an intensely personal or national theme can be made to appeal to a world audience by the universal significance of the technique used. Both the Disney symphonies and the Clair operettas substantiate this.

Let us assume that cinema presents the perfect fusion between art and industry: the perfect combination of a creative mind and a reliable means of expression provided by the movie-machine. Let us assume that the film as a medium of expression depends for its value on some interpretation

of life, whether it be lyrical, political, philosophical or what not.

If the aim of all cinema were to record the physical appearance and natural sounds of the world in which we live, then I have only to send a cameraman into the street to turn for an hour and, if he is not a complete fool, the result when projected on the screen would be a perfect work of art . . . without selection, direction, arrangement or purpose, which of course is absurd. Nor, on the other hand, is film direction simply photographing actors and actresses in specially constructed sets, behaving according to the requirements of a given story. The process is more complex. A director assembles and selects in terms of his medium various creative ideas and desires incited by almost every part of his being. At one and the same time, he considers his theme and his players, envisages his innumerable angles of vision, his lighting and his changing compositions; imagines his sounds and the speed of his movements; visualises his assembling and contemplates the eventual result in the cinema. All these distinct but closely related ideas and materials are arranged, developed, suspended, dispersed and rearranged—gradually becoming fused into a unified film under the will of the director. In the perfect film these elements are closely interwoven, the unity achieved by their fusion of greater value than simply their sum. Acting, photography, laboratory, sound, story and settings—all are subservient to that indefinable element which is the expression of the director's individuality.

To a great extent a film director takes his style and feeling from the branch of society to which he belongs. His outlook is undoubtedly influenced, if not conditioned, by the circle in which he moves. It is not without interest that many of the best recent American films have glorified the gangster, elevated the hoodlum to the peak of heroism, paraded the big shot as exemplary of a self-made successful business man, cloaking the whole with a propaganda main-lead title.

But the individual quality of a director's films depends on even more than this background. It depends on a desire to create. There can be no significant film art without this creative urge. A film may be the expression of a director's observation which he invites us to share with him. It may be

that he has new ideas about an old theme, or that a new theme arising out of modern conditions appeals to him for projection. And provided his mastery of cinematic technique is sufficient to make his meaning clear, then the more interesting his outlook the more attention will he receive. What we really expect from a good film, and so rarely find, is the distinct individual dominance of the director. We constantly hope that his next film will reveal a unique crystallisation of his thoughts on the problems or delights of existence, that it will present a theme easily acceptable to the average person by the inclusion of everyday occurrences. We expect certain psychological values arising out of sympathies and sentiments common to us all, and certain philosophical values arising from the intelligence of the director in question. It follows that the good film director is he whose intelligence is broadest, who not only sees and appreciates the objects, persons and movements which he puts into film form, but realises their universal significance.

Perhaps genius in the cinema means the expression of actual truth, of the fundamental facts of existence which generally lie hidden beneath the tangle of mundane occurrences. Any film director can relate the material facts about an object simply by showing it on the screen. To reveal its inner meaning and essential reasons for existence demands a sensibility so rare that it is absent in all but a few directors in the cinema at its present stage of development.

To use the familiar axiom of the painter Delacroix, nature is only a dictionary to the artist. The film director goes to nature or reality for his visual and aural imagery just as a writer goes to a dictionary for the proper sense and spelling of a word. But just as a dictionary is not a great work of literature, neither is a series of photographic images of natural objects projected on a screen a good film. It is the rhythmic unity which the director builds upon this basis of nature which may be a good film. It is the reason underlying his *choice* of natural objects, the quality of light, the angle of vision, the speed of movement of both camera and material—in fact, the whole way in which he chooses to photograph them and the manner in which he arranges their order on the screen according to his need that constitute cinematic art.

Cinema involves everything in life that has emotional

value. It is the task of the director to select objects, persons and movements as he desires from the storehouse of the world and to dramatise them—to draw out their emotional value and put them on the isolated screen-area in a darkened theatre to enforce his argument. Obviously, memory plays a great part in the mental make up of the intelligent director. Anywhere and everywhere he has the ability to make mental notes of incidents, objects, persons or effects of lighting which at some later date he utilises for special dramatic emphasis. He is a fortunate artist, our film director. There is little in this world that he cannot bring before an audience in order to state his philosophy. Each shot of the many out of which he constructs his film is a realisation of a fragment of life.

The success of a film as a unified work of art depends upon its final cohesion in the minds of the audience. Although the film director works in terms of shots, he must ever consider of greater importance the effect of their sum. On the other hand, he must be certain that there is a definite concentration of vision in every shot he takes. Whether moving or static, each shot must be dynamic in its attack on the senses of the audience. It must arrest the attention of the most lethargic spectator, appeal to that unconscious aesthetic appreciation which is present to some degree in every human being. Watch for the magical reaction of the audience to the motor-racing in *The Crowd Roars,* the machine-guns in *Scarface,* the aeroplanes in *Hell Divers,* all examples of physical thrill heightened by sound—the easiest method of arousing community sensations.

Actually the process of reception by an audience is swifter than description implies. Our reaction to a single shot or the combined effect of a series of shots is practically instantaneous. Its effect on our minds has taken place before we are aware of its presence on the screen. The process is emotional but ceases to be such the moment we form a distinct idea of it, giving way to the literary meaning of the shot or shots which is always last to arrive in our perception. For this purpose the natural mechanics of the cinema, with its rapid succession of changing images and sounds, achieves a greater purity of mind for audience reception than any other medium of expression.

Proceeding from analysis of sequences to analysis of a single shot, the whole illusion of movement in a strip of

film lies in the fact that two static images, the second placed beneath the first, printed on a band of moving celluloid follow one another in juxtaposition: the flowing of one into the next causing us to believe that we are seeing a single movement. This very simple act performed with remarkable accuracy by the machinery of the cinema (camera, printer and projector) is the beginning of all investigation into the art of cinematography. It is the starting place for the would-be student, long before he begins to criticise whole films or director's styles and mannerisms. This first function of the basic celluloid leads to the whole business of film construction—to the magical attraction existing between screen and audience when a film is being shown.

It may seem elementary. It may seem infantile. It may be common knowledge to anyone interested in cinema. But it is so obvious that it escapes the attention of practically everyone actively engaged in the film industry itself. Executives, producers, supervisors, directors, editors, they are too occupied with the super-hooey of a super-industry catering to a super-audience to investigate the real reason why people pay to see films.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# LET'S BE PERVERTS

## BASIL WRIGHT

THE cinema is a peculiarly good medium for the portrayal of pathological subjects, and yet, discounting various tiresome efforts by the *avant-garde*, the list of such films in the catalogue of film-history is surprisingly short.

I recollect "Secrets of the Soul," and for that matter a good deal of Pabst's work, notably "The Crisis," and—less successful—"Pandora's Box," "Hands of Orlac," "Nju," "Thérèse Raquin," "Sadie Thompson," "Greed," "En Rade," and "The Ghost that never Returns." It is interesting to note that most of these works were not only good cinema but also box office successes. They were also all noteworthy for their insistence on various visual terms which could not have been put across by any other medium. "Secrets of the Soul" was one glorious treasure hunt for Freudian Symbols. "Nju" contained Veidt, Jannings and Bergner. "Thérèse Raquin" was patterned all over with the meticulous paraphernalia of a French bourgeois household. "Greed" was a pioneer in surprising imagery. "Sadie Thompson" had rain and gramophones. ("The Hands of Orlac" "En Rade" and Room's film were less successful and need not detain us.)

Note, too, that none of these films could be stigmatised as unheathly or obscene. They nearly all contained a touch of good tragedy, a modicum of sympathy (in the Aristotelian sense.) In other words your pathological hero and heroine must be at bottom human and not brute. Your pervert must not differ in the essentials of humanity from your great friend (who is probably a pervert although you don't know it.)

That is why only two of the films on the list are American. The sensationalist machinery of Hollywood can't keep sensible over its pathological efforts. And the isolated efforts of Walsh and Stroheim only serve to emphasise this fact.

But perhaps Hollywood is keeping its real pathological patter up its sleeve, against the hour when horrors and racketeers have had their fling. Indeed, reports reach me (I write from the wilderness) that the new Laughton-Bankhead film approaches this category. "Two Seconds," which I shall shortly discuss, ought to, but doesn't.

Lang's "M," in spite of his preoccupation with the spectacular, is a pathological film par excellence. The Düsseldorf murders were fantastic enough in real life, and Lang only departs from that story when his passion for large-scale excitement gets the better of him. It is, then, the tale of a town terrorised by a child-murderer, the failure of the police to catch him, until the crooks of the city, whose own activities are seriously interfered with by continual police raids, take their own steps (very Langish ones too) and capture him. The climax of the film is his impromptu trial by the scum of the criminal areas, from which he is rescued just in time and be sentenced more decorously "in the name of the Law and the People."

The interest of the film (apart from the spectacularity, which is as good as Lang always is, and need not be further discussed) lies entirely in the amazing way Lang has got inside the skin of his hero (pardon the term). He is, you see, an ordinary sort of man with just this unfortunate mental kink, which periodically persuades him to go out and rip up small girls. And, as he states in his hideous and passionate defence at his trial, he can't help it. He can't help it.

Lang has succeeded in showing us the subtle difference between this man normal and this man homicidal. His manner of walking. A slight hint in his facial expression. A feeling of Tension. And (the best stroke in the film) a distorted musical phrase—from Grieg's Peer Gynt I believe—whistled over and over again. This whistling is the dominating factor of the film, and in its macabre implications forms the main key to the murderer's personality. Implication, in fact, is the most noticeable part of this film. Everyone has written about the balloon episode. Far more subtle and horrible is the scene outside the bookshop, with its restless movement, its really sexual climax as the murderer approaches the girl, and the sickening jolt (communicated to the spectator via the murderer) when her mother appears before he has time to speak to her, thus interrupting the visual orgasm.

The rhythm of the film as a whole I cannot pretend to judge, because I have only seen the English version, which, excellent though the dubbing was, had obviously suffered a sea-change. I presume that the original German version moves less slowly. The actor who played the murderer (his name was not given in the English version) was on all counts brilliant.

Now for "Two Seconds," which is Hollywood's version of the pathological specimen—none other than our old friend Edward G. Robinson, who relives his past life during the two seconds of electrocution. He is hooked, in spite of his pretensions to unhookability—by a low woman at a dance hall, and married to her while drunk. His best friend rashly tries to disillusion him while they are working on a skyscraper scaffolding (they are rivetters) and in the quarrel which ensues he falls off. Whereupon Robinson goes all to pieces, and sits in a armchair living on his wife's immoral earnings. A lucky bet enables him to pay her back, which having done, he shoots her.

There was an opportunity here to be as effective as Lang; but the whole thing is ruined by hysterical over-emphasis on the part of the director, and appalling over-acting on the part of Robinson. The result was no more thrilling than those old shockers about baboons with human brains grafted on to them. You have only to compare the vindication speech by Lang's pervert with that of Robinson in this film. The former is unbearably moving. The latter is unadulterated rant.

Technically, "Two Seconds" is excellent. The skyscraper scenes are Dunning *in excelsis*, the lighting effects during the trial scene are brilliant, and there is one shot where Robinson pushes his way across a crowded dance floor and punches the camera full in the lense, which is worth 3s. 6d. in itself. The electrocution scenes too are done with that hideous accuracy which enables Hollywood to disgust and horrify you as nothing else can.

One day, perhaps, Hollywood will acquire the great gift of reticence. Till then, however, it must be content to leave pathological and other soul-searching matters to its less affluent European rivals.

● **"M" Production: Ufa. Direction: Fritz Lang. Length: 8,500 feet. Distribution: National Distributors.**

● **TWO SECONDS. Production: First National. Direction: Mervyn Le Roy. Length: 5,763. Distribution: First National.**

# NEWS OUT OF HOLLAND

## T. HULSKER

A new film school has been founded in Amsterdam by Willem Bon, who has just completed an interesting experiment in an attempt to obtain a harmony between rhythm of montage and rhythm of music or sound, and to prove that not only the movement but the montage of successive shots ought to be sharply synchronised with the rhythm of the sound.

He has also experimented with the relation of sound and colour. To see whether sound was accentuated by a synchronised change of colour he worked for three months on a film which was only 200 feet long when completed and consisted solely of flashes of colour without shape or movement, used in conjunction with a fragment of Ravel's "Bolero." He has also made a short film composed of coloured shapes, synchronised with jazz music.

At the new Filmtechnische Leergang he is to carry the experiment a step further by combining rhythm of movement, shape, colour, and sound.

"Friday Evening," a one-reel sound film made by G. J. Teunissen in association with the artist Jo Spier was warmly received when exhibited recently at the Tuschinski-theatre, Amsterdam. Teunissen's previous film, "Pierrement," was a study of life in the Jordaan, or poor quarter. In "Friday Evening" he goes to the Jewish quarter and follows the course of the Hebrew Sabbath. To the accompaniment of the Avillon from the South Church tower the film opens with a view of the untidy quarter—the canal, the old houses. the market. We see work being stopped, shops being shut, diamond workers leaving their grinding wheels. Everybody flocks to the synagogue, a beautiful old building in which take place the picturesque rites which add much to the film's interest. Here the image is made secondary to the sound and cut to the rhythm of sound and music. Clever use is made of the statues in the Synagogue to illustrate the Hebrew songs. The film ends as it began, with a view over Amsterdam.

"Komsomol," the film Joris Ivens was invited to make by the Russian Soviet is now almost complete. Produced under the auspices of Meshrabpom Russ, the film deals with youth and its work in the social erection. The first part of the film was shot in Magnitogorsk, a new city of 250,000 people, in the service of the metal works, which arose in the course of two years in the Ural. The second part was turned in the coal centre of Kusbas in Siberia. Recording was done on the Russian sound apparatus of Ir. Tager.

During October and November Ivens will be back in Holland, and with Lichtveld he will finish the second part of the Zuiderzee film, which should be ready for showing in February.

Several members of the Polygoon Studios of Haarlem have formed a new film group known as "Visie" (Vision). The new studio, which is planned for the production "of films of a high artistic standard," is in charge of J. de Haas, who has already made "Groei," Ab. Keizer, director of "Lente," and the scenario writer Max de Haas.

Jan Hin's film, "Rerum Novarum" has now been renamed "Kentering" (Overturning). Its subject is the Catholic Labour Movement, which arose from a papal letter of Leo XIII., endorsed by the present Pope. The treatment is a combination of documentary and acted fiction.

# NEDERLANDSCHE FILMLIGA

## International Bulletin

Commencing in our next issue we hope to publish exclusively in Europe an English translation of the Bulletin of the International Bureau of the Nederlandsche Filmliga, the object of which is to obtain an international distribution of experimental films and artistic independent productions.

The work of the Bureau till now has consisted mainly of investigation and documentation, but contacts are rapidly being made with film organisations throughout Europe, Africa, and America, which should result in an international co-operation that cannot fail to have a beneficial influence on the future of independent production, particularly in the smaller countries where cinéastes suffer both from lack of support and facilities for the remunerative distribution of their work.

The director of the Bureau is J. Hulsker, Nieboerweg, 214, The Hague, Holland.

## FILMS OF THE QUARTER

# GLOBE TROTTING BY CAMERA

### WITH COBHAM TO KIVU

*Photography: S. R. Bonnett. Editing: R. E. Dearing. Length: 6,023. Distribution: Gaumont.*

As though conscious of the fact that, through the adverse rates of exchange, many would-be travellers have been obliged to stay at home this summer, the cinema has been doing its utmost to offer us arm-chair travel as compensation. The year which started with Fairbanks' fine feat of story-telling, "Around the World in Eighty Minutes," has since given us a hundred chances of travelling in the realms of gold. Some have been major opportunities, such as F. S. Smythe's record of the British Himalayan Expedition "Kamet Conquered" (reviewed elsewhere by Basil Wright); "Northern Lights," the record of the British Arctic Air Route Expedition; "Congorilla," the latest jungle film of the Martin Johnsons; and "With Cobham to Kivu," Sir Alan Cobham's aerial voyage of discovery up the Nile. And there have been scores of minor travellers' tales, excerpts from the note-books of the camera globe-trotters.

A too zealous exposure of the camera's faculty in faking has left us suspicious of the type of sensationalism included in such films as "Africa Speaks," and the stupendous "Trader Horn." Fairbanks himself in his picture made gaily satirical capital out of our credulity in this matter when he showed how easily the pursuit of, and hand-to-hand fight with, an apparently ferocious tiger might be faked. With this in mind, we cannot be expected to register the anticipated thrills when, for example, in "Tarzan the Ape Man," Johnny Weismuller engages a lion in mortal combat—and emerges strangely without a scratch on his broad back.

So easily may screen "realism" be obtained by a skilfully-used camera that the type of travelogue which naively reveals Africa—or Arabia or Andalusia—"as it has never been revealed before," always remains little suspect. The value of these straightforward records of travel is not so much in their quality as cinema, in construction or in photography—though excellence in each is obviously beneficial to the film as a whole; their fundamental importance is in the authenticity of the records they present. And when we can no longer rely on their record, they are by so much less valuable.

Of all the travel films I have seen this quarter, I liked most the journey "With Cobham to Kivu." This is something of a pioneer among documentaries and its unique qualities do not appear to have been properly appreciated. Sir Alan Cobham's object in making the flight up the Nile and across the Blue Mountains to Lake Kivu

was to look for fresh bases suitable for seaplanes and to demonstrate the practicability of this type of transport in Africa. But the film is more than a pictorial record of a voyage of discovery. For the first time it seems, the aerial camera is given a large and long opportunity to show what it can do; and this aerial travelogue is a remarkable revelation of the startling effects in panoramic geography which it may obtain. By no other means and by no other medium could so effective an impression of so large an area be given in so short a time. As the camera takes us up the river from Alexandria past the Pyramids, Luxor, the great dams, the cataracts, the gorges and the swamps to Victoria Nyanza, the plain facts of geography are fused with enthusiasm, and what had been a matter of text-book description and diagram becomes a real experience. S. R. Bonnett, who was responsible for the photography, has achieved some outstanding and occasionally magnificent work. The film has been effectively edited, appropriate close-ups being inserted between the panoramic shots, and the commentary is informative and never stupidly facetious.

"With Cobham to Kivu" is a film of a pioneer flight. There is no reason why it should not itself be a pioneer film—the first of many aerial documentaries that will take screen globe-trotting into the air.

FORSYTH HARDY.

## ALONE

*Production: Sovkino. Direction: G. M. Kozintzev and L. S. Trauberg. Photography: A. N. Moskvin. Length, 8,500. Distribution: Film Society.*

So far, I am afraid, the Russians have let us down very badly on the question of Sound. In spite of the dictatorial manifesto issued by the Eisenstein group in 1928, they have still offered us nothing new or exciting. Presumably they are in a position to steal the patents of all the best sound systems and incorporate them in one of their own. Yet their recording is so far shockingly bad. Presumably they are if anything freer than anyone to make experiments in sound technique. Yet they have produced nothing in this line except Vertov's "Enthusiasm," which did no more than prove how much din the average sound projector can carry without bursting.

"Alone" was made as a silent and post-synchronised. One is prepared, therefore, to make excuses for it—until one remembers Hitchcock's "Blackmail," which was probably an earlier effort and about five times as efficient. Barring a word of approval for the music, I think the sound aspect of "Alone" had better be left out of consideration. I shall therefore discuss it as a silent.

It contains the same virtues and faults as "New Babylon." It has the same sense of rhythm, the same feeling for the atmosphere of a given sequence. It has also the same tendency to clowning and foolishness (e.g., the crude colour sequence as the honeymooners go off on the tram), which, I am afraid is directly traceable to Eisenstein's influence (e.g., the offensive buffoonery in "General Line"). But worst of all, it has the same carelessness of construction—the most unforgiveable fault in any film work.

But for all that, there is one section of the film which shows how good the directors might be if they would consent to be less irresponsible. The story is of a school teacher who, after a great deal of heart-searchings and palaver, goes out to educate the children of the remote and poverty-stricken region of Altai, where the Soviet representative is a scoundrel, and the inhabitants are still under the control of a villainous and autocratic Bey. She fights her fight and loses, being just rescued from a frost-bitten death by a hastily-summoned aeroplane.

The section I recommend to you is that of her arrival in Altai, and her gradual realisation of the conditions in which she is to work. It is a magnificent example of slow-cutting. The dreary snow-covered steppes, the stupid and desultory people, the lazily evil authorities, the fetish of a dead horse's skin swinging in the breeze, and a dozen similar images all pass before your eyes in a long, dragging sequence which cannot possibly be the result of chance editing. The directors knew their atmosphere, and found the way to put it across. In particular, the sequence where the teacher confronts the Soviet representative and his mistress in their dirty shack is a really fine example of what intelligent shooting, combined with a rhythmic sense of cutting can achieve. It tells you more about remoter Russia than twenty text books could.

There is still hope that Kosintsev and Trauberg will one day make a good film. That is why "Alone" is worth your attention.

B. W.

## THE ROAD TO LIFE

*Production: Mezhrabpomfilm. Direction: Nickolai Ekk.*
*Length: 9,600. Distribution: National Distributors.*

A journalistic colleague in a letter to me the other day claimed that "there are two films and only *two* (the rest are rubbish)—the Charlie Chaplin comedy and the Russian propagandist film: no matter if red as hell, fierce, exaggerated in method, unlikeable in aggression but, dammit, purposeful—right, wrong or awful." Whether or not we subscribe to this cinema exclusiveness, and without entering into the merits of screen propaganda, obvious, implied or concealed, we will agree that Russian films as a whole have the virtue of avoiding triviality. Nicolai Ekk's "The Road to Life" counts that among its many valuable qualities.

Its theme is the redemption of the bands of lawless boys who infested the cities of Russia after the Revolution and terrorised the inhabitants—a theme in itself dramatic and here made peculiarly penetrating by the imagination of Ekk's direction. The film shows first the young vagabonds, dirty and dissolute, engaged in street-corner thieving for a band of crooks, and follows them out into the country to the Collective where, under inspired leadership, they regain proper physical and moral shape and are trained to find outlet for energy in useful work. When the spring floods cut off their supplies, the boys set out to build a railway to the city, and the film from here gathers a kind of lyrical ecstasy and builds impressively towards the emotional climax—the completion of the railway and the arrival of the engine on its maiden trip with the dead body of the boy's leader borne on the cowcatcher.

It may be that in the climax, the propagandist moral—the sacrifice of the individual in the success of the experiment—is made distressingly obvious; but there is no doubt about the film's unrelenting emotional grip. There are faults, though they may be only in the version shown in this country: the texture of the photography is bad, the recording indifferent and the superimposed English titles inadequate and poorly expressed. But these are minor blemishes on a fine film. Ekk emerges as a director of imagination and a craftsman of resource. From all his players, notably Batalof, he has drawn superb performances. His film is purposeful, provocative, stimulating.

F. H.

## THE MURDER OF DMITRI KARAMAZOV

*Direction: Fedor Ozep. Distribution: Film Society.*
*Production: Terra. Photography: Behn-Grund.*

Ozep is a Russian Sternberg. He has the same feeling for cinema in his veins and the same command over the possibilities of any set or sequence. He has also the same inability to make a film. With Sternberg he must go down to history as a magnificent, a glorious second-rater.

Intrinsically this film doesn't mean a thing, and it certainly isn't Dostoievski. But in detail it has a great deal of points from which most of us can learn a lot. For Ozep is not one of your weak-minded directors. He has the grand manner.

He starts his film with a sensational sequence depicting the departure of a train from a station. Direction, photography, cutting, sound are all above reproach. But you can't get away with a climax which has no antecedents except the credit titles and no result except the ordinary (explanatory) opening sequence of the film proper. The fact that he ends his film quite dramatically in the same manner is no excuse whatever—*pace* the highbrows.

The rest of "Karamazov" is in the same style—a series of patches ranging from your true purple to a washy mauve. "The Ride through the Forest," "The Gypsy Debauch," "The Midnight Murder," "Epilepsy in the Cellar"—all admirable pieces of direction and nearly all fine pieces of cinema. But no film, no film at all.

For his ability to handle his actors—which is phenomenal; for his uncanny sense of tempo; for his camera movements; and for his sense of the dramatic, Ozep deserves loud applause. His art-director, and more especially the writer of the music, are first-class, and the recording of the clever sound-score (speech, natural sound, and music) is very good. In fact, few films have impressed me more during their running, and few films have seemed so weak in retrospect as "Karamazov."

Anna Sten—an old Ozep find—has improved unbelievably since "Gelbe Pass," and our dear friend Rasp has his finest part since "Warning Shadows." No one else has such a knack of making you feel nervous and uncomfortable all the time he is on the screen.

B. W.

## THE WET PARADE

*Production: M.G.M. Direction: Victor Fleming. Length: 10,258. Distribution: M.G.M.*

It is curious how anxious Hollywood has become for us to realise the horrors and obscenities of American civilisation. It is almost as though the executives were in the pay of Sovkino. After a spate of films showing up the unsavoury goings-on of American racketeers and American prisons, here comes "The Wet Parade," ostensibly an indictment of prohibition, but actually a revelation of the permanent insobriety of the citizens of the U.S.A.

The actual moral of this much-heralded film is obscure. The first half shows us the Southern States in pre-prohibition days, where, it appears, respectable old gentlemen like Lewis Stone got drunk every evening, and were finally reduced to D.T.s and death by razor. The second half describes how in the North, after prohibition set in, weak-minded hotel proprietors like Walter Huston got drunk and killed their wives, and brilliant young playwrights like Neil Hamilton went blind on hooch, and even Schnozzle Durante was bumped off by racketeers. As a finale, the heroine (married of course) has a baby, for whom better things are prophesied, though without much conviction.

Just another example of the difficulty of combining box-office and propaganda. Too much insistence on personalities and unhealthy melodrama; and too little care devoted to documenting the march of events, and the political undercurrents which are really the controlling factors of the subject. A Milestone or a Roland Brown might have made something of it, but as it is, it remains a dull film, and far, far too long. Even the acting of that grand old trooper Huston cannot raise the interest much.

I wonder what Upton Sinclair thought about it.

B. W.

## L'ATLANTIDE

*Production: Nero. Direction: G. W. Pabst. Camera: Barth and Schufftan. Music: Wolfgang Zeller.*
*Adaptation from the novel of Pierre Benoit by L. Vadja and A. Arnoux.*

A Nero Film. Direction: G. W. Pabat. Camera: Barth and Schufftan. Music: Wolfgang Zeller. Adaptation from the novel of Pierre Benoit by L. Vadja and A. Arnoux. With Brigitte Helm, Pierre Blnachar, Tela Tchai, and Jean Angelo.

A programme note significantly remarks: "N'est-il pas naturel qu'un homme comme Pabst, qui, dans chacun de ses films, change de sujet et de milieu, ait été tenté par cette évasion vers le mystérieux Hoggar . . .?" And indeed the Pabst of "Secrets of the Soul," "Jeanne Ney," and "Pandora's Box" has become with the advent of speech and sound the Pabst of "Westfront 1918," of "Kameradschaft," and now finally the Pabst of "L'Atlantide." The critic's remark: "Pabst is principally concerned with the development and understanding of the intricacies of the minds of his characters" has lost some of its validity with each succeeding sound film, until at length we find Pabst dealing in "L'Atlantide" with a mythical, abstract personality. If we therefore expect this film

- Further character studies from Flaherty's new film of the Aran Islanders.

• From "Friday Evening"—a film of the Jewish Sabbath in Amsterdam, by the G. J. Teunissen and Jo Spier.

form an independent film society and an organizing committee elected to make arrangements for holding a series of performances during the coming winter. The first general meeting is to be held in October.

## MORLEY COLLEGE FILM CLUB

A flourishing film club, which already has two successful seasons to its credit, exists at the Morley College for Adult Education, London. Exhibitions are held in the College lecture hall, and among the notable films already shown are *Berlin*, *Drifters*, *The Italian Straw Hat* and several of the more important Russian pictures.

A serious study of the film is also part of the ordinary activities of the College, quite apart from the activities of the Film Club, and this winter a series of public lectures is to be given on the "Art of the Cinema," the lecturers being John Grierson and Francis Birrell.

The Secretary of the Film Club is Mr Roy G. Townend, 61 Westminster Bridge Road, London, S.E.1.

## MERSEYSIDE WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY

This Liverpool Society has had a somewhat chequered career. Its films have had to be shown in uncomfortable halls in order to avoid the irksome regulations of authority, but nevertheless its members now number 500—all enthusiasts, looking forward to the opening of the new season, which it is hoped to commence with *The Road to Life*.

## OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY

The First meeting of the O.U.F.S., which is open to all past and present members of the University, both men and women, will be held on Sunday, October 16.

The Society, which was formed in January 1931, at first showed mainly silent films, such pictures as *Bed and Sofa*, *Caligari*, *The Passion of Joan of Arc* and *Shoulder Arms* being presented. Now, however, the policy of the Society is to show the newest talking films, as far as possible, and these of every type. With this object in view the programmes of the last two terms have included *Quick Millions* and *Her Highness Commands* as well as *Mädchen in Uniform* and *The Murder of Karamazov*.

## ETON COLLEGE FILM SOCIETY

One of the most popular institutions at Eton is the Film Society, which consists of some 250 members of the Upper School. Only silent films can be shown in the school hall, nevertheless plans for the coming term include, in addition to *The Windjammer* and *The End of St Petersburg*, the showing of *Kamaradschaft*—silent, but with E. C. sound effects!

The spirit of enterprise is in George Snow, President, and his lively Committee.

## EDINBURGH FILM GUILD

The Edinburgh Film Guild hopes to enter upon its third season with a new and more comfortable clubroom at 17 St Andrew Street, where a library of film books and periodicals will be at the disposal of members. Performances will continue to be held in the Caley Picture House, and a further series of interesting lectures is being arranged. Periodical shows of amateur films of an experimental nature will be given in the clubroom, and a series of special children's performances is being organised in co-operation with the City Education Committee. An exhibition of British Film Stills will be followed later in the season by a Russian Cinema Exhibition, which will include posters, stills, literature, and photographs of studio work and cinema architecture.

The opening performance will be on Sunday, October 23.

# WORK OR PLAY?

## A PLAN FOR AMATEUR CINE SOCIETIES

●

ERIK CHISHOLM

IN film-making one is undertaking a creative adventure, using a relatively unfamiliar idiom for expression.

If most of us find it necessary to spend ten or twelve years at school to gain some mastery over English Grammar and English Literature in order to express ourselves intelligibly in good English prose, it is unreasonable to expect that we can use a moving pictorial language expressively and create a good piece of film work if we have made little attempt to learn even the A.B.C. of this language. The creative musician thinks it advisable to study the grammar of music and other technical matters concerned with his Art over a period of from six to ten years before venturing on the composition of a large creative work such as a Symphony. If the amateur film-maker essays to create the cinematic equivalent to a Symphony without first having undergone as strict a training as the composer and author find necessary, it is little to be wondered at if the finished product is incompetent and worthless.

Instead of engaging in grandiose attempts at production the first thing an amateur Society should do is to form its members into a class for the study of the fundamental elements involved in film-making. I know of no text-book on the Cinema written with the same objective as are written Prout's "Harmony" and the "Standard English Grammar," but this is obviously what we require. Pudovkin's excellent "Film Technique" is the nearest approach to a text-book of this kind known to me. The second half of Rotha's "The Film till Now," and Elliot's rather pretentious "Anatomy of Motion Picture Art" would help to supplement the Pudovkin book.

The Analytical Method needs no commendation, and is as useful a mode of instruction for film students as it has proved to be for medical and art students. Sequences from film "Classics" in the Pathé and Kodak sub-standard libraries, chosen to illustrate a particular point in film technique, should be selected for study. Those dealing with the simplest type of action should, of course, be dealt with first. The Kuleshov experimental sequence, given on pages 85-86 of Pudovkin's book, might serve as an introduction. This little example contains illustrations of most of the fundamentals of the story-telling film. From it can be demonstrated that (a) the camera represents the eye of the spectator, (b) that the camera represents the eye of a spectator gifted with the power of altering his point of observation, and hence able to vary the distance between himself and the object observed (this is, of course, the cardinal difference between the techniques of stage and cinema), (c) that dramatic continuity is established on the basis of shots 3 and 4 of this example, i.e., shot 3—the young man points, shot 4—that at which he points is shown; (d) that the relative lengths of the various shots to one another is important.

The sequence to be studied should be shown in a half-darkened room, only the unlit screen being in complete darkness, and the members should sit with writing material in front of them. The sequence should be shown once through (the duration of its screening being duly noted), and then it should be screened shot by shot. After a shot has been shown, the members (whom we now may call students, in the best sense of that word) should be asked to write a line or two describing what they have just seen. The shots should be numbered, and whether adjacent shots are dissolved or cut should be noted. The distance of the observer (i.e., the camera) from the scene should also be recorded—close up, mid-shot, or long-shot. When finished, each student will have before him a shooting script of the sequence, taken down by his own observations, from which, in conjunction with the film itself, he may learn much. A comparison of the various descriptions of one and the same shot is often instructive, and is invaluable for deducting how much actual movement in a shot "gets across."

Having broken the flowing sequence up into separate shots (a procedure essential before an analysis can be begun), we can now study it in detail. Each time the observer's view-

point changes, the *reason* for this change should be clearly understood. For example, if the sequence under examination be the fight between Siegfried and the Dragon in the Ufa film *Siegfried* (issued on Pathé 9.5 mm. film), it should be shown how the camera behaves as an observer of the actual fight might behave, turning his eyes first to one and then to the other combatant. Seeing *Siegfried preparing to attack,* the observer asks himself: "What is the Dragon going to do about this?" His answer is given him when, turning his eyes on the dragon, he sees *the dragon on the defensive.* The observer is now anxious to see what Siegfried is doing, and he quickly directs his attention to the hero, to find Siegfried in a further stage in his attack . . . *raising his sword Siegfried rushes wildly at the monster.* The observer excitedly turns his attention again to the dragon and sees first *the dragon preparing to retreat* and then *Siegfried* entering the field of vision and *striking out at the dragon.* The Fritz-Lang films are excellent examples of a *normal* story-telling technique, and students should aim at acquiring just such a sane normality before attempting experiments in technique.

In an analysis of a film sequence we should endeavour to understand the reason for every change in the *distance* of the observer's viewpoint: why, for example, the mid-shot of Siegfried and the Dragon where *Siegfried is about to strike the dragon's eye* is followed up by a close-up of *the eye itself and the sword plunging into it* . . . to emphasise the importance of a detail which might otherwise escape our notice.

The time for which each shot holds the screen should be noted, and the general "tempo" of the sequence determined. The significance of "tempo" would be realised by working out the first five minutes of Dupont's "Vaudeville" and contrasting the relatively long shots in the opening Prison scene with their effect of ponderous solemnity—speaking of a world where normal reckonings of time are displaced by a wearisome infinity of time—with the succeeding Fair scene in which the quick succession of short lively scenes create an impression of light-hearted gaiety.

Analysis continued into a second year of study could concern itself with the balance of the various sequences in relation to one another and to the film as a whole, and to detailed

analysis within the single frame (a subject made particularly complex by the acceptance of camera mobility as a part of the cinema's regular technique) and with other aspects of cinematic art.

Exercises which aim at training the imagination (a faculty which, like every other human faculty, is capable of development) should be frequently indulged in. That of giving out a short incident in narrative form suitable for cinematic treatment which the student has to cast as a shooting script is excellent for this purpose, and one which is valuable in training the student in cinema to visualise his images and select from those visualised the ones most suitable to his particular treatment of the subject. Exercises should be compiled in finished scenario (shooting-script) form, and submitted for correction either to the individual member who has been acting as "teacher" or to a professional film expert, for criticism. The incident chosen should not exceed 50 or 60 single shots, to allow for detailed criticism, and it should be selected with the object of setting a definite problem to the student for solution. For example, in the novel version of Rene Clair's "A Nous la Liberté" the following incident occurs:—Emile climbs on to a wall from where he throws a bouquet of flowers through an open window to Jeanne who is sitting within a room on the first floor. The flowers are thrown rudely back at him, and Emile, under the impression that it was Jeanne who returned his flowers, walks away dejectedly. A few minutes later Jeanne appears and explains that it was not she but the foreman (Emile's rival for her affections) who, happening to cross the room at the moment when the flowers arrived through the open window and realising that the bouquet was a gift form his hated rival, flung the flowers back at him. The problem here is to decide how best Jeanne's explanation should be fitted into the sequence . . . as a "throw-back" at the end of the sequence? or occurring in its proper time-place with alternate flashes of interior and exterior? In either case the sequence requires careful handling. Flaws in the continuity, no justification for change in the observer's (camera's) position, are two of the obvious types of errors which are likely to occur in early attempts at this exercise. Comparison of a score of scenario treatments of the same incident can be of great value to students in showing many possible treatments of a single incident.

Once these exercises have been corrected, or if necessary entirely rewritten, the best half-dozen should be selected, and with the author of each script acting as director, the club should proceed on location and shoot the various treatments. This will give the student the opportunity of converting his imagined visions into actuality, and will gain him experience in dealing with the concrete things with which all films must at this stage concern themselves. There is good training to be had here in direction, and later, when the film is developed, in editing and cutting. A thirty foot Pathé or a fifty foot Kodak film will generally suffice for the recording of a single incident.

Another form of a second or third year exercise would be to screen a sequence from an early Chaplin film or other picture of this period (for example part of the tea shop sequence in the "Emigrant," issued on both 16 m.m. and 9.5 m.m. films), jotting down the various events in each shot to see how (or if) the sequence could be improved by the splitting up of each long shot into shorter ones: in other words applying cinematic devices to films conceived in pure theatre traditions. The sequences chosen for direct scenario (and later location) treatment should allow for scope in the use of fades, dissolves, "tracking," "panning," etc. These various devices should have been introduced and their correct cinematic uses demonstrated in the sequences screened for analysis, but anything in the nature of dragging these devices willy-nilly into a shooting script merely to make an effect should be severely frowned upon. Again I repeat, that a *normality* in story film technique is to be aimed at. The writing of short original scenarios should be encouraged. These should at first be limited to one sequence; indeed I should say that in the first three years of a film club's activities, no story-telling film longer than a sixty foot 9.5 m.m. or a 100 foot 16 m.m. film should be attempted, and that all such films should be made with a definite educative purpose in view.

A grounding in such a course of study as I have suggested would eventually give the student of cinema a sub-conscious background of film grammar. He would then no longer be inclined to take topical pictures merely for their photographic value. He would take little pride in any individual shot, however good by itself, unless he could mentally "place it"

and link it up with other shots into an ordered and logical sequence.

I doubt very much if the amateur ciné societies in this country as they are at present constituted are disposed to put in the necessary year or two of really hard study necessary to give them a foundation on which to build. With the exception of a solitary individual here and there, societies for the most part are quite content to amuse themselves playing at film making, expending an enormous amount of energy and misguided enthusiasm but producing films which, as films, are so much wasted celluloid. When the means of expression becomes second nature to a creative artist only then can he fully concern himself with the matter to be expressed; which is equivalent to saying that only then can he create Art.

## THE INSTITUTE OF AMATEUR CINEMATOGRAPHERS

The Institute of Amateur Cinematographers has been founded to promote an interchange of knowledge among amateur film-makers, to arrange for the exchange of films and for the collection and dissemination of technical information, and to place at the disposal of amateurs at all stages of development the advice of prominent experts. Its policy and activities are governed by no trade or other outside influences and it aims particularly at helping the lone worker.

Bulletins are supplied to members free, and are in two classes, some covering elementary and general subjects and others covering special subjects. New bulletins appear frequently and are attractively printed as booklets. These can only be obtained by membership of the Institute and are not available otherwise.

The Duke of Sutherland is President and the Chairman of the Council is G. H. Sewell. Full particulars of membership may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, W. E. Chadwick, Westlands, Crofton Road, Orpington.

# ACHIEVEMENT & ENDEAVOUR

The Sub-Standard Film Society (Hon. Sec., B. Braun, 27 The Ridgeway, London, S.W.19), has been formed with the object of exhibiting and studying experimental, abstract, and documentary films, and aims at doing for amateur production what the Film Society has done for the professional film. The S.S.F.S. does not produce films, though several of its members are engaged on experimental work, but it is anxious to get in touch with anyone in possession of 16 m.m or 9.5 m.m. films of an artistic nature with a view to including them in forthcoming performances.

Cambridge University Cinema Society, the Secretary of which is Raymond Kittoe, has now a well appointed studio at 13b Ram Yard, and a membership of over sixty. Standard stock only is used and two films are usually produced each academic year—recent efforts being a documentary of Cambridge, which has been sold to a distributor, and "Power," an ambitious sound film. The Society is helped and guided in its work by lectures from notable directors and technicians, among whom this session will be Anthony Asquith, Leontine Sagan, Andrew Buchanan, and Basil Wright.

Though the Glasgow Amateur Ciné Club works on lines similar to those outlined in the article by Erik Chisholm, its President, it has now reached the stage of carrying theory into practice and is engaged in at least two films of some promise. One deals with the technique of pianoforte playing, cut to the rhythm of the music. The other is an abstract, illustrating by means of light patterns the principles of musical rhythm and the sub-division and relative value of beats. Direction is by Erik Chisholm and Francis George Scott, both composers of note, and the photography is by James Glasgow. The Secretary is Diana Brodie, 63 Berkeley Street, Glasgow, C.3.

Since its inception a year ago, the Preston Film Society has produced "O," a short film on hiking, which one noted director has praised as being "perhaps the most intelligent amateur film I have seen from England." It is now at work on "Pylons," dealing with the electrification of the countryside, and "Three Doors," a mystery without actors. The Secretary, Judith Todd, Farington Lodge, near Preston, is anxious to get in touch with other amateurs with a view to exchanging films.

Edinburgh Film Guild has now completed a 16 m.m documentary of Edinburgh (in co-operation with Pinnacle Productions), and is at work on a one-reel standard film of the city. An abstract poster film by J. C. H. Dunlop, advertising the Guild's activities, will be screened in a number of the principal cinemas during October.

The Civil Service Ciné Society, of which Norman Reid, 369 Lonsdale Road, London, S.W.13, is the Secretary, is now concen-

trating on abstract and documentary work. Among films already or nearly complete are "Frankfurt au Main" (A. A. Peachey), "The Braemar" (Norman Reid), "Whitehall" (S. E. G. Moir), and "Art and Movement" (H. Orrell). The Society is open to all C.S. members.

Merseyside Workers' Film Society is making a film of life and work around Liverpool docks.

## REVIEWS OF SUB-STANDARD FILMS

*The Editor will be pleased to receive copies of amateur films for review. Carriage must be paid both ways and a preliminary letter is advisable. Though every care will be taken of films submitted, CINEMA QUARTERLY does not hold itself responsible for any loss or damage which may occur.*

Percy W. Harris's "Mountains of Manhattan" (Talkatome Library, 400 feet) makes no attempt at impressionism, but despite its somewhat tiresome panning it does succeed in achieving some striking effects amid the grandeur of New York's skyscrapers. Travel films are a special feature of the Talkatome sound on disc library, to which Ratcliffe Holme's "On Safari" has recently been added.

The Ensign Library is also strong in travel and includes "Shackleton's Expedition to the Antarctic," and "Cape to Cairo," both 10 reels. Incidentally, Ensign, Ltd., inform us that they are willing to consider amateur work for inclusion in their library, provided it is of technical excellence. "The field of amateur films dealing with special subjects of general interest," they state, "is one which we feel is capable of much more exploitation by amateur societies, and their activities would be more profitably devoted to this class of film than to the production of drama, comedy, and sensational stories, in direct competition with the theatres."

It seems a pity that more reproductions of the "classics" are not included in the big ciné libraries. To Pathé we owe a debt of gratitude for "Caligari," "Faust," "Siegfried," and "Vaudeville," and to Kodak for "Grass," and "The Covered Wagon"—but where are the others? If no commercial firm has the courage or can afford to issue them it seems that this is a job that the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers should seriously consider taking in hand.

The Scottish Travel Association, 37 George Street, Edinburgh, 2, has formed a library of sub-standard films illustrating different parts of Scotland. Included in it are the Edinburgh Flim Guild documentary of Edinburgh and two films of the Highlands by Alan J. Harper of Pinnacle Productions. The films are lent free to *bona fide* film societies and similar organisations.

# THE MISCELLANY

●

*Meine besten wünsche für das "Cinema Quarterly." Mit herzlichsten grüsse für alle meine freunde.—Conrad Veidt.*

As the fight for control of the Cinematograph Fund grows fiercer, progress towards the establishment of a Film Institute by the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films proceeds apace. In preparation for an appeal to the Privy Council for a Royal Charter, the Commission is now working on a draft of the Constitution of the Institute, in which task it is having the help and advice of several influential M.P.'s favourable to the scheme. When ready, the draft, which will be on the lines outlined in *The Film in National Life,* will be submitted for consideration to appropriate educational, political, and film interests. In support of its aims the Commission will hold during the next few months conferences at Manchester, Bristol, Cambridge, and in Scotland, and is preparing a memorial to the Prime Minister and the Lord President of the Council, which will be signed by some hundreds of influential persons throughout the country.

*If I were a director of the London press I would sack* 8 *out of* 10 *contemporary film-critics.—St John Ervine, in World's Press News.*

A contract has recently been signed in Prague between A-B Films and Yugoslavenski Prosvjetny Film, a Yugoslav company under state patronage, which is of great national, cultural, and economic importance for both countries. It practically means the mutual exploitation of Czechoslovakian and Yugoslavian films, and the systematic exchange of all important news-pictures. There is also a clause in the contract which emphasises the possibility of making in the new A-B studios at Barrandow not only Yugoslav versions of Czech films, but also the production of original Yugoslav pictures. The contract is acclaimed by the press of both

countries as the first step in establishing a Slavian film collaboration, in which it is hoped Poland and Bulgaria will also become interested.

Miss Jenny Brown, a Glasgow journalist, who last summer made a film of crofting life in the Shetlands, has now adopted film making as her career. For her first picture she lived alone for many months among the crofters, got beneath their reserve, and shot her film from the inside as it were. This year she has spent two months in a tent on the uninhabited isle of Stennis, making a film of bird life. With her Eyemo she has also taken several reels illustrating various crofting activities—peat gathering, keshie making, and the wool processes that end in Shetland jumpers. Miss Brown already has a firm grip on the fundamentals of documentary, and once she thoroughly masters the technique of cutting there is great hopes of her achieving something really considerable.

*Once we have judged a thing a work of art, we have judged it ethically of the first importance and put it beyond the reach of the moralist.—Clive Bell.*

Though the season of continental pictures at The Cambridge, Cambridge Circus, has now ended, the Academy Cinema in Oxford Street continues its policy of presenting international films and has arranged an interesting winter programme.

Forthcoming presentations will include *En Natt* (the first Swedish dialogue picture, a drama directed by Gustaf Molander, the famous Swedish director of silent days), *Paris-Mediterranee* (French dialogue), *David Golder* (French dialogue), *Zwei Menschen* (German dialogue), *Vampyr* (Karl Dreyer's fantasy), *"M"* (German version), *Harlekin* (Lotte Reiniger's sound silhouette), and *Lichtertanz.*

Revivals during the coming season will include *The Road to Life, Maedchen in Uniform, Der Hauptmann Von Koepenick, A Nous la Liberte,* and such classics as *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari, Warning Shadows, Waxworks,* and *Earth.*

We understand that Miss Elsie Cohen, the organiser of repertory at the Academy, to whom all serious filmgoers must be extremely grateful, intends ultimately to extend her activities to the provinces, and is on the lookout for suitable theatres in certain selected cities.

*In no other art that has yet been given to mankind has the taste of the least educated imposed itself on the taste of the most educated to the same extent. In the art of the cinema it is the suburbs and Wigan that rule supremely.—Hubert Griffith in The Nineteenth Century.*

A new and enlarged edition of the catalogue of the Empire Marketing Board film library has now been issued, and is obtainable from 2 Queen Anne's Gate Buildings, London, S.W.1. Among the new films are *Clothes of the Empire*, a sketch of the evolution of clothing, in which primitive and modern methods of manufacture are contrasted; two nature films, *People of the Sea* and *Birds of the Sea*; *The Milky Way*, showing the processes of the milk industry; and numerous other technical and educative films dealing with commerce and industry in various parts of the Empire. The most important part of the catalogue, however, is the section devoted to classroom films. Various grandiose schemes for the production of teaching films still remain up in the air, but the E.M.B. quietly and efficiently gets on with the job. It is something of an achievement that they have over thirty such films now available. Most of the films have been prepared to meet the requirements of an Education Committee and have been used experimentally in connection with lessons. With one exception all are available on non-flam 35 mm., 16 mm., and 9.5 mm. stock.

E.M.B. films are available free for approved displays at which no charge is made for admission.

● **THE MISCELLANY in future will be at the disposal of readers and contributors for open discussion on matters raised in CINEMA QUARTERLY or elsewhere.**

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# THE CINEMA LIBRARY

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A few years ago books on the cinema were almost as scarce as intelligent films. To-day the number can fill a shelf or two, and though we may quarrel with some of them, apologise for others, and heartily despise the remainder, certain of them are invaluable for reference and should on that account be in the possession of every serious student of the film.

For years now Miss Lejeune has brightened the Sunday breakfast with her *Observer* articles, and in *Cinema* (Maclehose, 5s.) she has attempted to arrange her impressions in their correct perspective. As a result the major figures, and only the major figures, of the screen are considered in relation to each other and to the cinema as a whole. We may disagree with many of her individual opinions, but the book is valuable for giving a wise bird's-eye view of the achievement of the cinema to date. A more considerable and closely documented volume is Paul Rotha's *The Film Till Now*, (Cape, 15s.), which, though its author would probably welcome the opportunity for revision, is still, along with its companion volume *Celluloid* (Longmans, 7s. 6d.), the most important work of reference that we have. The more technical aspects of production are dealt with by Andrew Buchanan in *Films*: *The Way of the Cinema* (Pitman, 5s.), which also contains a chapter on "Attitudes Towards the Cinema" intended to cure anyone suffering from dillettantism. Ivor Montagu's translation of *Pudovkin on Film Technique* is unfortunately now out of print and difficult to obtain even second-hand. It is in some respects a sketchy, unsatisfactory book, but it is the only one which gets anywhere near a rational explanation of Russian theory and treatment.

Societies and educational bodies which do their own projection will find much practical advice in Richardson's *Handbook of Projection* and *Sound Projection* (Odhams, 31s. 6d. and 25s. 6d.)

The most important of recent books, and incidentally the

cheapest, is *The Film in National Life* (Allen & Unwin, 1s.), the report of the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, largely as a result of which the Cinematograph Fund has come into existence. Apart from the many "recommendations" it contains, it includes a wealth of information, summaries, tables, and references for which every one engaged in film work or research ought to be duly thankful.

BOMBAY RIOTS. By C. Denis Pegge. (London, Scholartis Press. 10s. 6d.) This book is described on the title-page as a "Film Poem" and is in effect an experiment in the writing of an ideal film scenario—that is to say, a scenario which will stand on its own literary merits, without necessarily being shot, just as a play may be read for its literary merit even if it is never performed. It does not, indeed, seem to have been Mr Pegge's intention to produce a "shooting-script"; he merely applies a film technique to the material for a novel. In a future issue of *Cinema Quarterly* we hope to deal with the general question of scenario writing, considered in its literary aspects, and that will be the occasion for noticing Mr Pegge's experiments at more length. Meanwhile we can agree with Mr Anthony Asquith, who contributes a foreword, that the experiment is completely justified, and that no other form could have achieved the same results.

H. R.

PLAYS. By Ivor Novello. (London, Methuen. 8s. 6d.) This volume contains, in order of production, *Symphony in Two Flats, Party, and I Lived with You,* with an introduction by Edward Marsh. The first is widely known through its film version, which used only one of the "flats." Mr Marsh, however, dispels any mystery that may have given a halo to the unusual construction of the piece when he writes that "*Symphony in Two Flats* is composed to two distinct plays, a melodrama and a farce, audaciously sandwiched in alternate layers." There was no real aesthetic basis for the simultaneity of the play's action, and it was perhaps as well that the film confined itself to the "floor above." *I Lived with You,* the last of his works, finds Novello with a substantial theme—the clash of two sharply contrasted outlooks on life—and this he sustains with considerable dramatic ability. In Mr Marsh's words, he may yet write a play which will survive the theatre of his time.

F. H.

MODERN PHOTOGRAPHY, 1932 (London. Studio. 7s. 6d.) PHOTOGRAPHIE (Paris, Arts et Metiers Graphique. 100 fr.)—In both these books, which contain examples of recent work by leading photographers throughout the world, the influence of the cinema is largely apparent. The posing and pretty, lifeless groupings that have tired us of the annual Salons have given place to vigour of movement and an expression of the beauty in natural everyday things and events. Many of the prints, and in particular those of Munkacsi, examples of whose work appear in both publications, might deceive one into thinking they were actually stills from a film. The artistic validity of certain press photographs, the effects of which could only have been obtained fortuitously, may well be doubted; but only in *Photographie,* which includes several negative prints, are there any evidences of preciosity —to be found in the work of Tabard, Franz Roh, and Le Pennetier. Modern photography, like cinematography when it first realised the mobility of the camera, is too much inclined to favour angles without having a proper understanding of their implication; but apart from Rado's woman with two cats in the Studio volume (strangely chosen to adorn the cover), most of the prints contained in each selection could teach the film camera-man something of his own job. A study of their technical perfection is also commended to the inglorious producers of cinema stills.

N. W.

HOLLYWOOD AS IT REALLY IS. (London, Routledge. 2s. 6d.) One of the excellent little "Seen by the Camera" series, which also includes *Beauty in Animals, The Male Body,* and *Negro Types.* Sixty-one photographs of work in the studios, of stars at work and play, and of the activities of the men behind the camera, with a gently sarcastic introduction and explanations by Dr Erwin Debries. An instructive picture book which should dispel some lingering illusions.

ONCE IN A LIFETIME. A Play by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman. (London, Gollancz. 6s.) The text of this deadly, calculated satire on the Gilbertian craziness of Hollywood reads well. It is full of pungent and malicious wisecracks, and is a useful, and necessary, complement to such films as *What Price Hollywood* and *The Making of a Star.*

to be what we have hitherto regarded as good Pabst, we shall be disappointed: on the other hand, if we look for good cinema, our attitude may be less vulnerable.

The story of "L'Atlantide" has certain points of resemblance to Rider Haggard's "She." A silent version of the film by Feyder was seen in this country six or seven years ago. The opening shots are good. Swiftly and subtly an atmosphere of mytsery, of impending disaster is established. The photography and cutting are brilliant throughout the film, but particularly so at this point and during the sandstorm sequences towards the end.

Brigitte Helm, although she has little to do as Antinéa, is superbly beautiful, but scarcely suggests the hard relentless creature we expect her to be. I persist in believing that the Helm of "The Wonderful Lie" is the true Helm, as incapable of real sophistication as is Greta Garbo.

Though "L'Atlantide" adds nothing new to cinema it is not without its remarkable qualities. Something interesting, something amusing or terrifying is always happening, and the deliberately cynical introduction of the ultimately civilised compere who plays the host with such charm and tact, saves the story from being wholly ridiculous. The French version, seen in Paris, is here noticed. An English version will soon be shown in this country, where it should meet with deserved success.

Henry Jeet.

## KAMET CONQUERED

*Direction and Photography: F. S. Smythe. Length: 5,000.*
*Distribution: F. S. Smythe.*

I was lucky enough to have a private view of this film in its original version only a few days before "The Times" correspondence columns began to flow with the best Empire Burgundy of protest against the commercial villainy of Wardour Street. Theoretically, Wardour Street was perfectly justified in not buying a film if it was not a money-maker. Actually, Wardour Street ought to have seen the possibilities that were obvious even in the somewhat lecture-tour version which Smythe had prepared.

As it pursued its tortuous and lengthy path, I found my cutter's instinct growing stronger and stronger, till I ached for scissors, cement, and a free fortnight with the material. The subject was good; so was the photography. All that was needed was construction.

However, the storm is over. "Kamet Conquered" has been re-edited, synchronised, and shown at the Polytechnic. I recommend it as an unusual interest film and deplore it for what it might have been—a real document of adventure and of difficulties overcome, patterned with the peculiar grace of mountains, valleys, rivers, flowers, and strange peoples which Smythe and his camera captured so nicely.

In any case, there are two things in this film which would come through under any circumstances. One is the crossing of the mountain torrent. The other is the final climb to the summit, when the mountaineers, their legs like lead in the rarified atmosphere, fight their way in literal slow motion to the furthermost heights

of Kamet. It is to Smythe's great credit that he worked his camera at all under those conditions. If the results aren't box office, nothing is.

But what a FILM it might have been.

B. W.

## RASPOUTINE

*Production: Gottschalk. Direction: Adolphe Trotz. Distribution: National Film Distributors,*

This film has a deft and well-constructed scenario. From the first shots, in which we see Raspoutine carpenting in a small Russian village, until the final climax of his death, the film never loses its extraordinary grip. The scenes in which the Tsar's daughter is healed are brilliantly restrained and there is no false theatricalism about the closing sequences. Only Raspoutine's orgiastic tendencies are slightly over-emphasised; otherwise a fine impartiality is always evident. The film is Veidt at his best. "The Student at Prague" was his most distinguished silent film: in "Raspoutine" speech and sound do not hamper the fluidity of his technique; and this performance restores him to the front of screen actors. Photography and cutting are good, and there are many felicitous uses of sound, both direct and by way of suggestion. The dialogue is German, with occasional sentences in Russian; sub-titles are skilfully superimposed. "Raspoutine" will shortly be shown in this country.

Henry Jeet.

## No. 17

*Production: B.I.P. Direction: Alfred Hitchcock. Length: 5,766. Distribution: Wardour.*

This last film of Hitchcock's before he was appointed studio director for B.I.P. at Elstree is a much less ambitious picture than "Rich and Strange." Hitchcock here is content to build his film round a haunted house, some Continental crooks and a stolen necklace—and that is about the measure of the theme. The film opens at funereal pace but flies into a flurry of action towards the close in a race to the coast between a train and a motor car. Though the matter is slight the manner is always interesting and there is sufficient craftsmanship in the film to remove any doubt as to its directoral control. But it is an insignificant production to have come from "England's greatest director."

F. H.

## JEAN DE LA JUNE

*Direction: Jean Choux. Length: 7,708. Distribution: National Distributors.*

This French talkie, which I saw in Paris last year, was included in the Academy's French season in April, 1931, and is now available for general exhibition. It is an adaptation by Jean Choux of Marcel Achard's stage comedy and derives much more from the stage than from the cinema. Described per programme as "Un tableau adaciuex des moeurs modernes," it is a witty, satirical piece of essentially Gallic quality, very smoothly and skilfully acted by Madeleine Renard, René Lefebvre and Michel Simon whose "Clo-Clo" is a delightful piece of fooling. Lack of action and movement, however, are serious faults in a film whose appeal will be chiefly to those expert in French.

F. H.

# "SHORTS"

EVER since the cinema became a paying proposition, there has been a steady market for the short film. Most of us still look back with regret to the days which gave us Chaplin, Larry Semon, the Keystone Cops, and all the varied joys that the fertile genius of Sennett flung riotously on to the screen. Some years ago, a change occurred. The tendency of the big houses to run two feature films and very often a stage show caused rather a slump in the short-market. There are signs now that a revival of the short subject has set in. (The name Hal Roach is sufficient recommendation for any programme as far as I am concerned.)

There is some reason therefore for attempting a short review of the present position and future possibilities of the one-to two-reeler.

Shorts fall roughly into four categories—the topical, the comic, the animated cartoon, and the documentary or interest film. Surrealist abstracts I rule *hors concours*. The comic and cartoon fields under the generalships of Sennett, Roach, Disney and Fleischer, are too well-known and popular to need much mention here. It is enough to say that in technique, slickness and general efficiency they are invariably hard to beat.

The topicals—by which I mean newsreels and magazines—have been much affected lately by the success of such houses as the Avenue Pavilion and the Tatler, and their quality has improved very noticeably. Gaumont, Pathé, Paramount, and, in particular British Movietone News, have raised their standards of photography and cutting by 100 per cent. One of the lovliest movie recollections I possess is Movietone's version of Amy Johnson's arrival at Croydon; as a combination of camera-sense and pure journalism, it was utterly unique. Working as they do under the restrictions of locality and weather, the newsreel units have their own specific problems and methods. I notice that recently their crack cameramen have been developing a special shoot-

ing technique by which they turn a pouring wet day to their own account. Instead of trying to pile on exposure and avoid the "wet" effect as much as possible, they seem now to shoot *for* the rain effect, which gives them a gain both in quality and in realism. I wish, however, that they would treat their selection of subjects in the same go-ahead fashion. Apart from big or stunt events, the continual round of hospital-extensions and parades of troops becomes very monotonous. With all the varied happenings of this crazy world to draw on, the programme at a Newsreel theatre should have twice as much interest and kick as it does. There must, for instance, be far more exciting things in Florida than bathing-belles, however attractive. Still, no student of films can afford to miss the newsreels.

A much higher standard should be expected of cinemagazines; they are not rush jobs, either in the shooting, cutting, or selection. Yet the only consistently original magazine shorts are Andrew Buchanan's Ideal Cinemagazines, with their ingeniously linked subjects, their careful selection and their steady camerawork. They are obviously backed by a really efficiently-organised library. You may not approve of Buchanan's punning commentaries (I do), but you must admit that he is a man who knows his job and does it really well.

Occasionally an unadvertised and starless short captures the public imagination, and a cinema finds its patrons coming to see that rather than the feature. I recollect an item some years ago at the Plaza called "The Sunset Hunter"— a curiously naive piece of work which seemed to appeal to every type of brain. In the same way the documentary short is beginning to come to the fore. We have, of course, always had the scenic film, with its heavily tinted landscapes and embroidered titling or commentary. But just now there is gradually creeping into the market the documentary short proper—a film about something real and, nearly always, because real, interesting. "Novelty and ignorance," said Dr Johnson "must always be reciprocal"—and a film which shows you how your bread is made (which I bet you don't know) is an illustration of this dictum. You supply the ignorance and the documentary is *ipso facto* the novelty. There is, of course, more in this than meets the eye. The difficulty of the documentary director is to exploit your ignorance, and he may often do it more effectively by startling

• From "The New Generation," a film depicting modern educational methods, made for the Chesterfield Education Authority by Stuart Legg

The photography is by S. Gibbs

- From "M," Fritz Lang's film based on the Düsseldorf Murders

or moving you than by merely instructing you. At any rate, the whole documentary world is at present almost untapped, and I suspect that within the next few years we shall see the documentary short coming more and more to the fore.

Though ostensibly the Cinderella of the Cinema, the short film—be it topical, cartoon, comic or documentary—is a force to be reckoned with. Remember, too, that as a training ground for a director the short-business has innumerable advantages. That is one argument for keeping an eye on it. In any case, a little more compression all round is a prescription that the cinema might well use for its own advantage.

B. W.

## THE NEW GENERATION

*Direction: Stuart Legg. Photography: S. Gibbs. Length: 2,300. Distribution: New Era.*

Chesterfield is being sensible about modern education—so sensible that it has even enlisted cinema to illustrate its aims. I only hope the authorities of other towns will see this film and learn their lesson. The rapidity and efficiency with which it was made, and the remarkably small expenditure which it entailed should be additional factors in converting the diehards.

The aim of the Chesterfield Educational Authority is that the children should leave school not merely with the benefits of a cursory education, but with a suitable groundwork of training towards jobs for which their abilities seem likely to qualify them. (I know this sounds axiomatic, but it is unfortunately all too much of a rarity.)

This film merely states and illustrates those aims. It is straightforward and unpretentious. It says its say and finishes. In intention and in fact it is one of the soundest shorts I have seen. It also contains two isolated shots for which I offer my best thanks to Legg and his cameraman. One is of a girl turning a mangle (sic) which is worthy of Tissé. The other is of a boy looking up at some factory buildings.* The force of this shot, apart from its excellent composition, lies, I think, in the fact that while the boy is looking up the camera is looking down.

My only quarrel with the film is purely personal. The technique is definitely that of the Welwyn group. It is a technique I dislike because of the element of self-consciousness and posing in its make-up. I am aware, however, that I am in a distinct minority, so content myself with saying that if you like Welwyn, this is Welwyn at its best and most sensible. And Legg is one of our sanest directors. He knows his stuff. At the moment all he lacks is a touch of lunacy—the *sine qua non* of a great director.

B. W.

* See Still facing page 36.

## BLACK DIAMONDS

*Direction and Photography: Charles Hanmer. Length: 4,816. Distribution: Wardour.*

Nothing will persuade me to reveal the plot of this film. It might make you giggle: it might even put you off seeing it. With shame I recall that I laughed during Reel I. (I rejoice to say I soon stopped.) Even so, superior people who raved about "Kameradschaft" will probably pour scorn on this amateurish, roughly photographed, old fashioned hotch-potch of a film. Yet it is one of the few existing proofs that in cinema, as elsewhere, sincerity of purpose can triumph over every possible technical and aesthetic defect.

Hanmer is a coal-miner. He decided to make a film about coal miners. With an ancient camera and a staggering belief in himself and his ideas he set to work. He filmed everything, from mining disasters on Christmas Eve to miners' daughters doing ballet-dances at tea time. He slung all his material together on the skeleton of a ridiculous story (which I again refuse to divulge), and post-synchronised the result.

Considerations of technique go by the board; so too, does that pregnant motto of M.G.M., "*Ars gratia Artis.*" All you are offered is what Hanmer wanted to say about the miners' life; and if, among all the absurdities and naivetes, you don't feel the pull of real solid facts striking home to your innermost sensibilities, well, you will know that you are a very poisonous brand of highbrow indeed.

Hanmer is a portent. I wish he had confrères in other industries For I certainly believe that if he had been a grocer, and his film had been called "Brown Sugar," the result would have been, in its own queer way, equally impressive.

As a postscript, let me call your attention to the theme-song (composed by a miner), which is a vigorous and melodious march. I hope you will soon be whistling it.

B. W.

## THE MUSIC BOX

*Production: Hal Roach. Direction: J. Parrott. Length: 2,000. Distribution: M.G.M.*

As is well known, Messrs Laurel and Hardy are world-martyrs. Their lives are spent in undertaking tasks of apparent simplicity but actually full of devastating snags. Usually they succeed in carrying them to the desired conclusion, but not before everything for miles around has been smashed, crumpled, and utterly destroyed. But through it all these amiable creatures, though undergoing adventures and hardships which make Ulysses look like a stay-at-home, stagger along with an invincible optimism in the ultimate charity of Providence. The pettishness of Oliver, and the tears of Stan, are but fleeting clouds over the sunshine, and in the end their bowlers remain battered but unbowed.

"The Music Box" is a modern version of the legend of Sisyphus. A large packing-case containing a pianola has to be transported up an enormously long flight of steps and into an inconveniently situated house. Six times at least the summit is achieved, and six times the packing case sails down the steps, sometimes in solitary grandeur, sometimes with Laurel and/or Hardy attached. Unseen goldfish pools ensnare them. Ropes break. Hats become mixed. Fuses explode. Fingers are pinched and noses flattened. The consignee's house is entirely destroyed and he in turn destroys the pianola.

A tragedy, in fact, that would have warmed the heart of Aristotle. Indeed, I sincerely hope that the proposed People's Cinema University will institute a Laurel and Hardy lectureship. Their films are always well-directed and brilliantly cut, and will be standard text-books long after the de Milles and Vertovs have vanished into the waste-bin.

The recording is as usual excellent, and special commendation should go to the noise made by the pianola when it is dropped (which is often). It emits a pleasing jangle, as of Aeolian harps and church bells in the distance, which wanders engagingly round the bruised heads of its conveyors.

From every point of view this is the best short of the year. It keeps up the great tradition set by "Aerial Antics" and "Laughing Gravy." I recommend you to see it twice.

B. W.

## RADIO EUROPA

*Direction: Hans Richter. Distribution: Film Society.*

This short German film, made in conjunction with Philips Radio, attempts to give "An impression of the daily use of wireless in our lives." It opens with an announcement of the weather, looks at some morning exercises done to radio instruction, shows the loud-speaker as a breakfast-table companion and continues throughout the day reflecting in pictures the various activities with which radio is associated. Notabilities of several countries, including the Prince of Wales, Einstein and Mussolini, are briefly seen and heard as are announcers representing such stations as London, Paris, New York, Berlin and Toulouse. The film appropriately concludes with several shots of Big Ben. Any review of so large and diverse a subject is inevitably spasmodic, but here little effort has been made to find a real common basis for the incidents and episodes, and the film's construction is weak and haphazard. It is a very much less effective piece of craftsmanship than Arthur Elton's similar film, "Voice of the World."*

B. Braun.

## STEEL

*Production: Ufa. Direction: M. Kaufmaun. Length: 1,000. Distribution: Gaumont.*

This is the most interesting of the Kaufmann educationals. Unlike the others, it lacks the slightly comic English commentary, and has instead a specially composed musical score. What it loses in education it makes up in coherence.

*A review of this film is held over pending the appearance of a revised version, which, in one opinion, is likely to be "the best job in impressionism done in this country."—EDITOR.

"Steel" is no more than a series of shots illustrative of the processes of the Steel industry. The photography ranges from the sublime to the pathetic. Some of the cutting is atrocious: the rest is efficient. The music—quite rightly composed purely as an accompaniment to the visuals—frequently defeats its own ends by cacophony unallied with rhythm. The real film about "Steel" still remains to be made.

Nevertheless there is a vigour about it which is only too rare in the average interest film. A safe bet for Film Societies—to be run immediately before the Disney.

B. W.

## THE DUMP

*Production: G.F. Enterprises, Ltd. Camera: William Shenton. Length: 3,300. Distribution: (not fixed).*

The fans of critics and criticism will have noticed a sudden though short-lived burst of enthusiasm for a film called "The Dump." Belfrage spread it across a page of the "Sunday Express," hailing Benjamin Artz (the director) as the year's Von Sternberg and "The Dump" as the year's "Salvation Hunters." Lejeune gave it her blessing in the same day's "Observer." On the Belfrage notice Phil Hyams played it one Sunday night at the Trocadero (Elephant and Castle), and the "Film Daily" on the Tuesday following slammed it endways. A ragged and wrong beginning for any film.

"The Dump" is a first independent effort by a young man who has wandered around the world and is still wandering. It tries to put over in three reels (sound) what it feels like to be down and out, but it is not a documentary in the ordinary sense of the term. It is neither a straight record of unemployment nor an interpreted record of it. A few shots are taken from the pavements and the park benches, but the larger part was shot in a studio with the derelicts as actors. In something like the following fashion.

Sequence 1 is concerned with feet tramping into the drabness of a dump. Sequence 2 beats up their coughing and plays it over pans of monotonous walls. The coughing goes on and on with a certain brutal insistence. It is rag-timed on visual images of doors, walls, corridors. The sequences which follow flit back and forth between the poor and the rich, using symbols in sound and mute to cross-section society. A child cries and goes on crying: the rich in their clubs are disturbed, move uneasily, are a trifle disgusted: the poor on the park benches do likewise. They are all similarly reading the "Daily Telegraph." Artz seems to be making some commentary on herd instinct, and the infant yell symbolises presumably The Cry Of Humanity. A child laughing is similarly used at a later stage. The feet-tramping and coughing sequences are repeated in identical form (duped) to demonstrate that dereliction is as desperate (and hell as hopeless) to-day as it was yesterday.

These symbolic cries, coughs, laughters and tramping feet give a certain form to the film and some real interest. It is a matter of opinion, however, whether a continuing sound symbol (however varied in time, or rag-timed on visuals, or built up by emphasis)

is a sufficient connective. It gives meaning to a sequence, but that meaning tends to be a simpler and at times more monotonous one than it need be. In this example the shots did not help a great deal to give variety and point to the sound. The hoboes might have been better observed and their more derelict postures and gestures built up to give greater poignancy of statement. A few trifles in poetic imagery would have helped. One had a weird feeling that Artz was so sorry for the whole world that he had no time to be sorry for the derelicts under his nose.

These criticisms apart, the technical interest of "The Dump" is too great for the more studious Film Societies to miss it. As an entertainment or a creative work it stands or falls by the value of the continuing sound symbols aforementioned. Are they naïve in principle or only naïve in execution? Are they sufficient to tell a story or convey an experience? Are they adequate to convey a richly felt experience?

J. G.

# FILM SUPPLY

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Undernoted will be found the Addresses of the Renters from which the principal Films mentioned in this issue may be obtained. The omission of any Film from this list signifies that it is not yet available for distribution in this country.

ALONE. *Film Society, 56 Manchester Street, London, W. 1.*

BLACK DIAMONDS. *Wardour Films Ltd., Wardour Street, London, W.1.*

CONGORILLA. *Fox Film Company, Ltd., 13 Berners Street, London, W.1.*

JEAN DE LA LUNE. *National Distributors Ltd., 22 Soho Square, London, W. 1.*

KAMET CONQUERED. *F. S. Smythe, c/o Cinema Quarterly.*

L'ATLANTIDE. *National Distributors Ltd.*

"M." *National Distributors, Ltd.*

No. 17. *Wardour Films Ltd.*

NORTHERN LIGHTS. *Albion, c/o Cinema Quarterly.*

RADIO EUROPA. *Film Society.*

RASPOUTINE. *National Distributors Ltd.*

STEEL. *Gaumont Co. Ltd., Film House, Wardour Street, W. 1.*

THE MURDER OF DMITRI KARAMAZOV. *Film Society.*

THE MUSIC BOX. *Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer Pictures Ltd., 19 Tower Street, London, W.C. 2.*

THE NEW GENERATION. *New Era Films, 26-27 D'Arblay Street, London, W.1.*

THE ROAD TO LIFE. *National Distributors Ltd.*

THE WET PARADE. *Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer Pictures Ltd.*

TWO SECONDS. *First National Film Distributors Ltd., Warner House, 135-141 Wardour Street, London, W.1.*

WITH COBHAM TO KIVU. *Gaumont Company Ltd.*

# THE FILM SOCIETY, LONDON

## IVOR MONTAGU

THE Film Society of London is not quite the oldest body interesting itself in the ambiguously named "unusual"* film—that distinction belongs to the Vieux Colombier in Paris, where Tedesco, a Rumanian, started a cinema on repertory lines in winter 1924—but it is the second oldest, and the doyen of all that have attempted to act along non-commercial lines. It came about in the following way. Soon after *Warning Shadows* was shown in London, Ivor Montagu was in Berlin (autumn 1924) doing a special correspondent tour of the German studios for *The Times*, an assignment which, in the end, he never wrote up. Angus MacPhail (now Gainsborough scenario editor) was with him, and together they saw *Nju* (Jannings, Veidt, Bergner) and other stuff they knew their friends at Cambridge would give their eyes to see, and ran into Hugh Miller, an English actor now in America. On the train back Miller and Montagu got together. "Why shouldn't there be a Film Society for films no one in England would ever see otherwise, just as there's a Stage Society?" In London Miller knew and added Brunel (at the premiere of Lubitsch's *Forbidden Paradise*), and Iris Barry, not yet of the *Mail*. Montagu, meeting McKnight Kauffer over a boot advertisement, pressed him into service to design the Society's monogram, a much-admired, bold F.S. with a tiny attenuated figure attached, deciphered variously as a Cupid and as a Red Indian. Iris Barry brought in Sidney Bernstein, who brought in Dobson. Reading through the papers and liking their criticisms of *Warning Shadows*, the conspirators enlisted also Mycroft of the *Standard* and Atkinson of the *Express*. That, substantially, was the group that got down to it. Brunel dropped

early off the Council, though he still helped with the editing; Atkinson—for reasons no one else has ever known and which he has possibly by now forgotten himself—thought it wiser suddenly to attack the Society for trying to get Russian films he himself had recommended to it; Miller went presently across the seas to star for Gloria Swanson; Iris Barry has now followed him. But the rest of the veterans are still on duty with the new blood.

The procedure adopted after a number of cabalistic confabulations between the above was as follows. First, a list of possible programme material was assembled based on (a) Montagu and Miller's Berlin report; (b) world-wide gossip in Mycroft's and Atkinson's possession; (c) answers of the Russian film people to a questionnaire drawn up by Montagu and Atkinson and put by the former on a visit made to Moscow for the British Museum; (d) some of the shorts in Tedesco's programmes. Next, guarantees of support were canvassed (very successfully) from eminent unimpeachables like Lord Ashfield and the late Dame Ellen Terry (G. B. S. and H. G. are the most notable survivors) to lend an air of respectability to the whole scheme. Third, detailed plans were got out for a system of shows (at the New Gallery, free, thanks to Lord Ashfield's generosity) exactly on Stage Society lines. Finally, all was burst on to the press and trade at a banquet in the best tradition.

This was summer 1925. The reception was—from the press, cordial (except by Lejeune, who called us bloated plutocrats, and said that no scheme that couldn't include annual subscriptions at tuppence was worth tuppence to the cinema's great heart)—from the trade, cautious. The trade was right to be on its guard. Its view, most clearly expressed by Fredman (now running the *Referee*), was that the Society might be used by the ill-informed as a stick to beat the trade. Success of a film at an F.S. show, he pointed out, would be followed by abuse of the trade for not having shown it to the general public, a totally different type of audience. For the Society it was replied that the difference of the publics was clearly recognised; the error would never be made by us. Meanwhile all we wanted was toleration of our

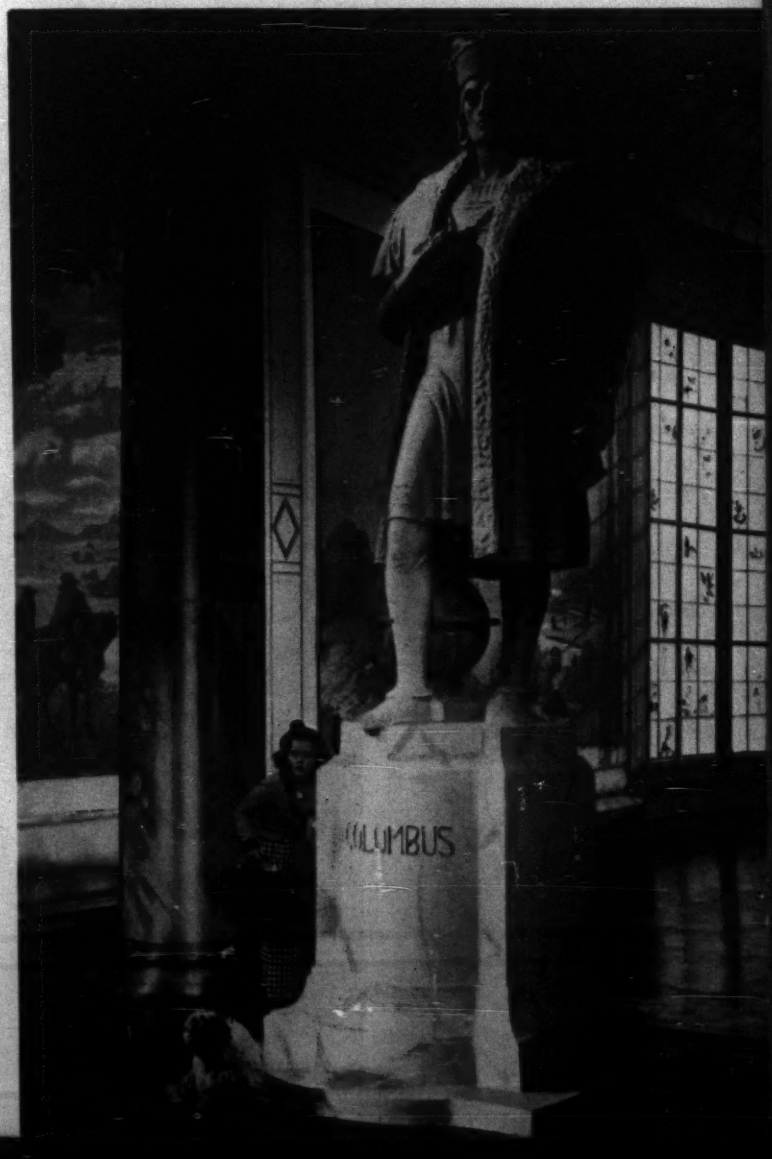
*A good epithet for our quarry is hard to seek. "Artistic" is pretentious, "cultural" bunkum; Captain "Jock" Orton, on a hunting expedition with us in Paris once, announced to a L'Herbier cocktail party that we had come over "pour chercher les films curieux," with what instantaneous success may be imagined.—I. M.

public, a chance to study stuff that his didn't demand, no cash but help wherever it didn't cost anything. On these lines we should do no harm, might bring new publicity and interest new people. And these have been our relations ever since. The trade has never grudged its help, and I think it recognises we've not been hurtful.

I shall never forget that first show. From the moment the curtains drew apart punctually (in itself a triumph), and in silence (in itself an experiment), to disclose Rüttmann's absolute *Opera* 2, 3 *and* 4, the Society was made. The main film was *Waxworks*, poor Dr Leni's best (it has never since been shown properly in England; for some unearthly reason the eventual distributor changed the ends round back to front and the B.B. of F.C. insisted on Jack the Ripper being called Spring-Heeled Jack), and we finished with *Champion Charlie*.

But this first show nearly didn't take place at all. Just like so many of our juniors after us, we had casually assumed that what is allowed to plays must surely, in equity, be allowed to films, forgetting that English law broadens down from accident to precedent, and nothing is ever as anybody would expect. It turned out—what nearly everyone knows now—that though this boastedly democratic country has never passed a Bill on the matter, and never even discussed it in Parliament, the clumsy wording of an incompetent lawyer has not only established a film censorship, but given it powers over private shows as strict as over public. In short, we needed L.C.C. sanction. This, of course, we found out about two days before our show. The L.C.C. Theatres Committee very generously let us have it for the emergency, "without prejudice," deciding to discuss our death or continued life afterwards. And, afterwards, the discussion, at the full L.C.C., voted "life" by 69 to 66! Not so bad, when you think what the movement now has grown to—the younger societies all over the country, and, seven years later, the Home Office throwing bouquets about our work in the Commons and specifically amending the Sunday Observance Act so as to enable it to go on.

Well, what have we done since then? Times have changed, and it is not easy to recapture some of the high-spots of those early days. *Raskolnikov*, when we tried a two-hour show with no music but a battery of coughs; *The*




- From "Happy Ever After," the first of the international films being produced under the joint auspices of Ufa and Gaumont-British. It is being supervised by Erich Pommer, and the cast of the English version includes Lilian Harvey, Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge.

• From "Komsomol," a film made at the request of the Soviet for the October celebrations by Joris Ivens, the Dutch director.

*End of St Petersburg,* when a naughty journalist, writing over three different names in about twenty different papers, tried to pretend there was a riot, and only the happy accident of the presence in our audience of a Conservative M.P. saved us from a knuckle-rapping in the Commons; Leger and Murphy's *Ballet Mecanique,* when there really was a riot, but not about politics, and Clive Bell said "Marvellous," and Dobson, overhearing, confessed ruefully: "Begins to make one wonder what they say about one's own work, doesn't it?" There were fights and quarrels a-plenty, and I do not think it is conceit to claim that, in the midst certainly of plenty of dull drivel, we did introduce to England new techniques, new workmen, and new films that have not always been infertile. But what now? To repeat, times have changed. Counting to the favour of our past all the parallel movements we have aided, in the provinces and in other countries, occasional bright innovations such as Eisenstein's lecture course and less bright, if braver ones, such as our ventures into production, measuring also the fruit of our spade-work by the success now apparently fixed (Hurray!) of the London repertories, well—aren't these very repertories, these very new societies, beginning to make our work supererogatory? Aren't we growing grandmotherly? Why don't we shut up?

This is a question we often ask ourselves. (And this year will be the third in succession that the Council has split on whether or no it should recommend the A.G.M. to wind up.) Prosperity, yes. Members, plenty. But when you can see films like *Hauptmann von Koepenick* in the west end, and like *M* and *Turksib* and *Le Million* all over the place, it really is worth asking ourselves whether we have any excuse for being. Our prime object is, as on the day of foundation, "to make available for study films (whether entertaining or not, whether 100 per cent. of them or only as little as 5 per cent. is worth study), not available elsewhere." Last year we had one score; *Maedchen* was our *Journey's End.* But one swallow doesn't make a summer. This year, two months before the season opens, our prospective programme includes exactly 0 names. Why then do we carry on? Well, even in London we still have a task. We are needed as a protection to the student against censorships hiding anything worth while. Though films banned or unsubmitted have always formed less than one-seventh proportion of our programmes,

it is still important for us to be on the spot for this function, in case of need. But there is a wider task; our object must be interpreted in no narrow sense. Except for those censored, provincial society and London repertory can show our films, true. But both live as yet insecurely on the brink of a volcano. The whimsies and perversities of each local Licensing Council threaten the societies in every province. An inelasticity of the Quota Act has menaced the repertories since their inception. We fight for a Charter of Uniform Recommendations from the Home Office for the first, an Agreed Interpretation by the Board of Trade for the second. I cannot reveal here in its fullness the essential part we play in keeping both alive even now. Should we abandon the struggle, withdraw the aid of our experience and fade away, just because our members can no longer endure the tripe that is all we can dish up for them nowadays after scouring the corners of the earth, second in the queue to the Oxford Street Academy? Fie! They must grin and bear it a little longer. And then, perhaps, who knows, one day, soon or late, we may hit on a new function, a new unusualness, and the old lady will lift up her skirts and once more go trotting gaily on.

● **In our next issue we shall include a brief history of the Film Society of Glasgow.**

## THE FEDERATION OF THE BRITISH FILM SOCIETIES

It has long been felt that the growing number of film societies scattered throughout the country should organize for the purpose of co-operation, mutual assistance, and the more effective propagation of their ideals.

As the result of a conference held at Welwyn on the 4th and 5th September, at which the greater number of the provincial and Scottish societies were represented, there has come into being the Federation of British Film Societies, the object of which will be to collect information about suitable films for private exhibition, to organize collective representation to authority on the needs of the movement, and to explore the possibilities of co-operative booking. Membership, at graded fees, is open to any society in Great Britain working on a non-profit making basis and having for its object the furtherance of the study of film technique

by performance on full-size stock of films not otherwise easily available in its neighbourhood.

The government of the Federation is entrusted to an Executive Council consisting of two representatives from the Film Society, London, four from societies outside London, and three co-opted members.

All communications regarding the Federation should be addressed to Miss J. M. Harvey, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1.

## THE FILM SOCIETY'S NEW SEASON

As Ivor Montagu indicates in his article in this issue the London Film Society has not yet reached Nirvana. It has much useful work yet to accomplish, particularly in the presentation of foreign films which have not been tailored to suit the prevailing conventions of Mr Short's examiners. Among the films for which negotiations are at present in progress are Dudov's *Kühle Wampe, Le Rosier de Madame Husson,* an example of the new Swedish talking film, and a new film from Japan. The first performance will take place on Sunday, October 23, at the Tivoli. Conditions of membership are the same as last season.

## LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY

So successful has been the first season that in future it contemplates providing double performances to cater for the large number of applicants who would otherwise be refused membership. The first Annual Report (which, incidentally, is a model of its kind and a delightful piece of typography) is one of the most cheering documents we have received. As sound apparatus has now been installed at Vaughan College, where the performances are held, several important foreign talkies are hoped to be included during the coming season. The Film Society Orchestra will, however, continue to accompany the silent features. Lectures on different aspects of cinema technique, to be illustrated where possible with films, will be given by Anthony Asquith, John Grierson, and Ivor Montagu.

The first performance takes place on Saturday, October 8.

## SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY

During its first season, when only silent films were shown, the Society obtained a membership of some 350. Facilities for the exhibition of sound films have now been obtained, but as 65 per cent of the members have intimated that they prefer silent to sound films, the number of performances will be divided equally between sound and silent features. An exhibition of film stills and literature is to be held in the local Art Gallery during one week in October.

## GLASGOW FILM SOCIETY

Probably the oldest organisation outside of London, and though faced with the competition of several other local societies which also include in their activities the exhibition of films, it enters upon a new season full of hope and enthusiasm, cheered by the fact that the Magistrates have now given permission for guests to attend performances. A new departure is the formation of student groups at Glasgow University and at the School of Art, from where it is hoped to recruit a large number of new members.

## MANCHESTER & SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY

This Society has probably the largest membership in the movement and certainly the lowest subscription—eight and sixpence. Under no political control, its object is to bring before its members films of outstanding artistic merit and "films of profound educational and social import." Discussions and lectures are also arranged at frequent intervals. The Society has had to face many difficulties in securing suitable cinemas for its shows, and on several occasions has had to meet the opposition of a somewhat intolerant Watch Committee. The Society is a vigorous and enterprising body, however, and generally overcomes its difficulties. Arrangements are now being made for the exhibition of several outstanding films of social significance during the season shortly to commence.

## IPSWICH FILM SOCIETY

Last winter the Ipswich Co-operative Society gave two shows of Russian films, including *Turksib*, *The General Line*, and *The Man with the Movie Camera*. The performances were so well attended that a public meeting was called to

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